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HIGH AND LOW;

OR,

LIFE'S CHANCES AND CHANGES.

BY THE HON. HENRY COKE,

AUTHOR OF

“A RIDE OVER THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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HIGH AND LOW.

CHAPTER I.

It would please us to remain a little longer at Mossbank, but during the lapse of time necessary to the recovery of Miss Bellerby's peace of mind, so many little events took place elsewhere, all-important because of their connection with the principal actors of this drama, that we must even leave Mary Bellerby in the midst of her troubles, to follow Pierce's progress in Town through the midst of his, which were so much greater.

As there is no place like home, there is no

place like London when it is a home ; but when not a home, there are few places more desolate. So long as Pierce had been the occupier of a spacious set of apartments on the first floor, in the Albany Chambers, with a housemaid, a porter, and a valet in his establishment, surrounded by all the indoor luxuries of the choicest furniture, books, pianofortes, &c., and having, within a stone's throw, the out-door comforts of two or three of the most fashionable clubs, he had found London as pleasant a home as he wished for.

It made very little difference to him at what season of the year he lived in London. If in summer, he had admission to any society he chose to enter ; if in winter, he had his clique at the clubs, or his originals, professionals, and nondescribables out of the clubs. If indisposed for all else, he had plenty of resources, and always the means of indulging them. In short, London had been his home, and he always returned to it with this feeling, which made

amends for quitting the country even at those times when the country is most enjoyable.

With what different sensations he now entered the crowded city! It was still his home, no longer by choice, but by compulsion. There were no Albany Chambers to look forward to, no easy sofas and assiduous valet, no grand pianoforte, no club dinners, no select breakfast parties in his own rooms, no opera-boxes, no brougham, no riding in the park, no tennis, no anything that was pleasant; but, on the contrary, everything that was unpleasant. He had not even a fixed lodging: all his things were at ——, where Mr. Court had placed them as directed. He had been to the Albany. The porter gave him a packet of letters. His rooms were bare to the walls: the warrant had been put into execution, and carpets, curtains, pictures, beds, bureaus, tables, chairs, fenders, fire-irons—every moveable thing—had been seized and carried off.

From the porter he learnt that several

gentlemen had been to inquire after him, and that three or four seemed anxious to take the chambers at the same rent he paid for them. He left word that his address would be ——, the house where his books and furniture had been deposited by Court on his leaving London; and, desiring the porter to inform any gentleman who wanted to know about the chambers, that they were to let at once at the usual rent, he thrust the bundle of letters into his pocket, and went forth in search of a lodging.

Like many gentlemen of his stamp, though he had lived constantly in town for the last six years, he was completely ignorant of the bye-ways which lay without the bounds of his particular path. It had never interested him very much to know what other men, not so well off as himself, paid for lodgings. Many men of his acquaintance seemed to manage comfortably enough in rooms not a fourth part as big as his. Many such men lived not very far from St. James's

Street; a quarter that would suit him well enough.

Thither he went, trying every house with "lodgings" stuck in the window. Bury Street, Duke Street, King Street, York Street, &c., he tried them all. He was astonished, and beyond measure disheartened, at discovering what mere rat's holes were to be got in this fashionable neighbourhood for thirty shillings a week. Thirty shillings a week was altogether beyond his "figure;" how could he afford to give thirty shillings a week for lodgings on three hundred pounds a year, —out of which he would have to pay fifty for the interest on the thousand he owed his banker? The honour of living in such a locality had to be sacrificed. He left it in disgust, and walked up Piccadilly towards Mayfair. Here rent was just as high and lodgings no better. How tired he got of ringing up dirty housemaids, and waiting for the "*Missus*" to show him the rooms and tell him how "'ealthy and hairy" they were,

how very cheap, and how remarkably respectable! All looked, to his fastidious and untrained eye, dens of gloom and wretchedness. The stiff uneasy furniture of horsehair and pale mahogany, the flimsy paper fly-trap dangling from the ceiling, the villainous taste, making everything conspicuously offensive, characterised each set of rooms he looked at, not too expensive for the means he was reduced to.

It was growing dusk: still he had no idea where to settle. It was useless to put off the inconvenience to another day by going for the night to an hotel; besides, it was expensive, and again he had nothing else to do. Gradually he relinquished the idea of finding quarters in the most fashionable part of the West End. He remembered having seen some decent looking lodging-houses in the neighbourhood of Whitehall. He entered three or four between that part of the town and the river; here rent was materially lower, still the same stereotyped model of discom-

fort seemed to have been closely adhered to. At last he was forced into the melancholy decision, that for one guinea a week he could nowhere find furnished apartments on anything approaching the same scale of grandeur as those which he had been in the habit of giving three for, unfurnished.

The landlady of No. 10 D—— Street appeared to be of a more accommodating and conciliatory disposition than the majority of lodging-house-keepers usually are ; and the afternoon's walk had made him sufficiently acquainted with some of the peculiarities of the class, to enable him to detect at once the spark of amiability which shone in Mrs. Daniels' buxom face as, bustling about, she explained how very "nice and comfortable" she could certainly make him. She could take him in there and then if he pleased ; the bed was well-aired, the rooms had been cleaned that very morning ; she had only to light the fire, and send her little boy in a cab

for his luggage, and it would all be as snug as possible in five minutes.

Between the combined influences of Mrs. Daniels' face, the promises of future advantages, and the happy reflection that he might go farther and fare worse, Pierce determined to remain where he was for the present; he therefore requested that his luggage might be sent for, his fire lit, and some tea and a mutton-chop brought up with as little loss of time as circumstances would permit.

Mrs. Daniels was as good as her word in exerting herself to the utmost. She speedily provided for the temporary wants of her new lodger. The fire was lighted, the boy dispatched, and the tea-tray set upon the table. All was bustle and anxiety, for the buxom landlady had learnt from experience the appreciable value of a good first impression.

Pierce, with his pocket full of letters, and his head full of anything but Mrs. Daniels, was naturally desirous of being left to the sole enjoyment of his own company; but

Mrs. Daniels, who by the way was a widow, and happened to have no other company, was equally desirous of treating "the gentleman" to the treasures of a conversability, it was her boast to possess in no small degree. The good woman bestowed so many smiles and hearty wishes upon her distracted lodger that, however much he might once have imagined her attentions would ultimately flag, he now saw she could spare an immense amount of assiduity, before her agreeableness would suffer by the diminution; and instead of fearing her neglect, his chief apprehension was lest she should prove a continual blister of importunity and annoyance.

The innumerable questions she put to him might have been attributed either to the score of an amiable interest, or to that unquenchable thirst for knowledge, generally designated in the female mind by the uncourteous title of curiosity.

"Had the gentleman a great many boxes?" she asked. "Had he only just

arrived in London? From what part of the country did he come? Had he ever been in London before? Would he take another cup of tea? another chop? Was he most partial to beef or mutton? Had he any particular wish to send his linen to a particular laundress? Did he like his shirts much starched, or rather limp in the collars? Was he in business? Had he travelled much? Had he been to ——shire? (She came from ——shire.) Did he wish for a featherbed? Did he know a gentleman of the name of Twopenny?"

As "No" and "Yes" were the monosyllabic replies to almost every one of these questions, Mrs. Daniels never obtained a fair opening for a very consecutive range of conversation. Pierce's yawns, introduced in a gentlemanlike and considerate manner in the beginning, increased in geometrical progression with the length of Mrs. Daniels' visit. He forgot, however, that Mrs. Daniels had not moved in that station of life where he

had learnt the elegant usage of the mute language of hints. There was no more connection, in Mrs. Daniels' mind, between the act of twice stretching your jaws and the plain English sentence, "You're a bore," than there would be in any other society between the fact of scratching your nose and the exclamation, "You're an angel." It was only by the industrious repetition of prolonged signs of weariness that Mrs. Daniels at last conceived the notion that her guest might be thinking of bed. The instant she was struck with the idea, her kind heart rebuked her for forgetfulness. She excused herself for leaving him all alone, and promised to return as soon as she had aired the sheets and made the room. Pierce begged her not to trouble herself to come up again that night, adding that he had a few papers to look over, which would probably occupy him till his bed was ready.

When Mrs. Daniels had departed he took the precaution, as soon as she was out of hearing, to turn the key, in order to secure

himself from further intrusion ; and, drawing a chair to the table, he examined the packet of letters which for the first time since he had received them, he now had an opportunity of reading. Those amongst the number which may interest us, as well as the rightful owner, we will take the liberty of perusing with him. The first he opened was from Longvale.

“ My dear Pierce

“ What the deuce has happened to you ? We have heard nothing of you since you cleared out, and left us as the shop-boy left his master when he bolted with the till, disconsolate for his loss. Ever since you went away, I have been as dull as ditch-water. As for Eda, I defy any one to make out whether she misses you or not. I don't say this to make you unhappy, old fellow, but I thought you would like to know the truth. Usually she is as chirpy as a cricket, only now and then, when your name is men-

tioned, she turns serious. But you know she is hard to read, and sometimes tries to look cheery when she don't feel so a bit. The 'porpoise' went yesterday. We had rather good fun with him after you left. He got awfully spooney on Eda, and as he *fancied* you had stood in his sunshine while here, he took a dirty advantage of your absence, and said of you what he didn't ought. Of course I wouldn't stand this, nor Eda either ; and she, I must say, behaved like a brick about it. When we saw what he was up to, we played him a trick or two that made him start, I can tell you. By backing him up, and patting him on the back, I persuaded him to go in for Eda with a regular burster, and he made such a goose of himself as you never saw.

"You know how enamoured he is of what he has the impudence to call his whiskers, which, after all, are but three hairs on one side of his face, and a place where they ought to be on the other. Well, I persuaded him he would

look much better if he made a clean shave of it, and told him quite seriously that Eda hated to see a chap with such an awful lot of beard. Jove, Sir! the next day he came down scraped to the quick—you never saw such a guy as he looked. Of course, my uncle chaffed him within an inch of his life; and upon the whole, the end of his visit, to use an original expression of Mrs. Gamp's, had 'all the effect of early gooseberries' upon him.

"Old Gregory left us about a week since. He is a good old boy, after all, and turned out much more of a trump than I took him for when I met him at Homburg. I expect he has taken an immense fancy for you. They say he is as rich as Cræsus, and I wouldn't mind wagering a trifle that he leaves you a good pot of money when he croaks. By the bye, talking of money, what a go it was Gerard Winter absconding, owing, as the report goes, thirty or forty thousand pound. I hear, but I hope there's no truth in it, he has let you in for no end of a lot. Some-

body told me you had left your rooms in the Albany, and were completely sown up. I asked old Stick-in-the-mud, who was writing to you, whether he had heard about it. If he did know anything, he kept it dark. There was another report that you were ‘coffee-milling care and sorrow with a nose-adapted thumb,’ down in ——shire; but whether to sell your place or live there, I couldn’t hear. Let us hear from you soon, old fellow, whether these reports are true or not. You know, if you want rooms while you are changing, ‘mine are yours,’ as the Spaniards say, to make any use of them you like, for I shan’t be up till the end of the season.

“ Ever yours very sincerely,

“ ARTHUR LONGVALE.”

The next was from Mr. Gregory, written on his passage through London. It expressed regrets at not finding Pierce in town, and informed him that the writer was obliged to

leave for the country, where magisterial business, and the management of his estate, would detain him for several months. He begged Pierce to come and see him when he got tired of London. He had no inducement to offer beyond the perfect quiet of a lonely house and a hearty welcome. He hoped if they did not shortly meet, that Pierce would write word to say how his affairs prospered. The letter concluded with encouraging sympathy, and with many sincere wishes for his young friend's happiness.

A third was an invitation to a *thé dansante*, at the Dowager Lady Pippledem's. A fourth was from Lady Pumpton.

“Dear Mr. More,

“We have been in London nearly a fortnight ; why have you not been near us ? I am so exhausted with our two months' scramble on the continent, that I feel it will take a whole London season to resuscitate me. Pumpton hated going abroad before we started,

and only went, I suppose, for my sake. He has come back more bored than ever. I wish you would come and enliven us. Two or three agreeable people dine here to-morrow ; will you make a fourth ? We are going to the play : so if you cannot come to dinner, come to our box in the evening. I know you despise balls ; but if you did care to go, Mrs. —— gives one on Wednesday ; all the world is to be there. I can invite you if you choose.

“ Yours very truly,

“ ARABELLA PUMPTON.”

The fifth letter contained two closely-written sheets of foolscap. Like all the others, it was dated near a week back. It bore no signature, but it needed none. More recognized the handwriting, and the contents spoke for themselves.

CHAPTER II.

“COULD I have guessed that he who snatched me from the terrors of starvation was the same whom I knew to be endangered by the machinations of my own bitterest enemy, I might have convinced you that my former warning by letter, was not a mere suspicion, to be treated, as you appear to have treated it, with neglect. Again I write, not only because you have proved my best friend, but because the life which you were the providential means of saving, is now de-

voted to a pursuit that may concern and must I am sure interest you.

“To return to the day on which we parted. When released by your merciful interposition from the distress which had almost overwhelmed me, my desire was to find employment in some mercantile house in the city. But the first obstacle to any improvement of my present condition, was, I well knew, the miserable plight of my external appearance.

“Investing, therefore, nearly the whole of what you gave me, in a new suit of clothing, I cast off the degrading badges of poverty, and once again assumed the garb of respectability. It is impossible to describe the emotions of delight with which this mere change of dress filled my heart. My previous dependence had not only made me act as a beggar, but the treatment I had met with had made me feel like a beggar. I was a beggar in spirit. All thoughts or feelings which education had taught me to prize, my altered circumstances were rapidly misplacing, to make way for others as degrading as the position in which I found myself. Freed

from the rags that won me little more than pity or aversion, I instantly recovered the spirit of a man. I had no longer to cringe before the needless wretch without a heart, or herd with the needy one whose heart was all depraved. I could walk the street unburdened by the oppression of a guiltless guilt. I could hold up my head and smile, fearless of being taken for a rogue or vagabond. Every shop window reflected back the change that gladdened me. I still had money in my pocket. And to your generosity I was indebted for all.

“The first day of my transformation, while walking towards the city, I met a man with whom I had once been extremely intimate, and for whom I had entertained the highest possible esteem. His name may be familiar to you, as the head of one of our largest mercantile houses ; it is Mr. W——. I recognized and stopped him, but until I had mentioned my name, he was unable to remember me ; so completely had illness and continued mental suffering changed my face and figure. At the first sound of my

voice he started with an expression of horror, or rather alarm, believing at the moment that he was addressed by a man who had been dead some years back. I led him into one of the narrow streets, aside from the main thoroughfare, where the absence of noise enabled us the better to converse together. I entreated him in the first instance, by all the friendship which had once united us, on no consideration whatever to repeat my name, or allude to having seen me. He knew the particulars of my unfortunate marriage. He assured me my wife was no longer living ; and used the most cogent arguments he could think of to induce me to throw off disguise, and return at once to my family. I remained inflexible. I did not deny that in the course of time I might sufficiently recover, to be able again to revisit my home ; but I declared that no power could influence my settled determination to remain for the present in perfect obscurity. I represented to him the necessity I was under of seeking

immediate employment, and trusted if he had it in his power, he would help me for the sake of our former intimacy. He promised to do so, and without mentioning the means by which he hoped to assist me, gave me his card, and requested me to call upon him early the following morning.

“ I did as directed, and to my inexpressible joy received from him the offer of becoming Indian agent to the firm in which Mr. W—— was the principal partner. My salary was to be £500 a-year to commence with ; and I was to leave England for Calcutta in a fortnight from that date. I received half a year’s additional salary in advance, to defray the expenses of my outfit ; and with a prospect before me the most suitable to my taste I could have devised, I had nothing left to wish for, except that oblivion which my new engagement seemed best calculated to ensure me.

“ This happy turn of events led me to hope that Fortune was at last weary of tormenting me ; but the temporary suspension

of her scourge was like the restorative administered with the rack—given but to revive sensation in its victims, for the pangs they are next to undergo.

“ While in conversation with my patron, I inquired of him if the destroyer of my happiness was still living in the world of fashion. Out of a delicate consideration for my feelings, he had avoided mentioning the name of Winter. In answer to my inquiries, Mr. W—— replied that, not many days since, Winter, having cheated a friend of the bulk of his fortune, had quitted the country, leaving behind a very large amount of debt. I eagerly asked the name of the person thus ruined. He answered, as I expected, Mr. More, of Moreton. I was then told that Mr. More had chambers in the Albany ; and in identifying Winter’s new victim with you, to whom I owed so much, I conceived a fresh cause of hatred for the man who had ruined us both.

“ What was my astonishment, my delight,

I may almost say, when, a few hours afterwards, I found Winter, as I fancied, in my power. He had not left the country! I had discovered him, I had seen him, I was within reach of him, and could seize him when I pleased!

“But I will tell you what happened. I was walking slowly through one of the narrow streets not far from Holborn. I wanted to find my way to a house in the neighbourhood, but, being unacquainted with the locality, had determined to ask the first person I met, who, from his looks, I should judge to be willing and able to give the information required. Being in no hurry, and, as often happens in such cases, I examined the faces of the passers-by, not caring to put my question to an uncivil or an ignorant person. Misfortune had made me a close observer and something of a physiognomist. I suffered several people to pass. Presently I saw one advancing towards me whose gait and features reminded me of

some one I had seen before : where or when I could not remember. As he brushed by me, I examined him carefully. His looks were on the pavement ; he was absorbed in thought. He did not see me. He had scarcely gone past, when again the back and walk were familiar to me. I knew the man now. I should have recognized him in the thickest crowd at any time. His image had haunted me through all my sufferings. That particular day he had never been out of my thoughts. It was Winter !

“ But how came he there ? Why had he not escaped ? I knew he was a bold, or rather, a desperate character. And he was disguised. Perhaps no one but I, who had such reason to remember him, and who besides was well acquainted with the common tricks of deception, could have recognized him. His whiskers were shaved ; his hair dyed red ; he wore a false moustache, which concealed the whole of his mouth. His dress was completely foreign. He had

on a broad-brimmed German student's hat, an ample cloak much worn and covered with braid, wide trowsers, and a large black satin stock. His face was begrimed with dirt, and he appeared to have padded himself between the shoulders, so as to give a stooping attitude to his head.

“He walked unusually fast, and I had some difficulty in keeping up with him without quickening my own pace to a run. My first impulse was to give him in charge to the nearest policeman; on second thoughts, an unaccountable desire possessed me to discover the secret of his movements, and I resolved to dog him to his retreat. It was no easy matter to keep him in sight without being noticed myself. He avoided the more crowded streets; but as he chose the less frequented ones, we two were often alone, and the danger of being then detected obliged me to follow at a long distance behind.

“I had watched him to one of the most poverty-stricken purlieus of Westminster,

where the narrowness of the streets, the smallness and decayed state of the buildings, the misery of the inhabitants, and the filth and stench of the atmosphere are hardly equalled in any other part of London. Turning in at a small court-yard, he stopped before a house which, judging alone from the outside, I should have supposed impossible to be tenanted. Pushing open a door which swung from one hinge, he entered, and as I was now close upon his heels, I heard his heavy step as he ran up the hollow sounding stairs. Another door, leading into a room on the ground floor, was shut. Within this room I could hear a woman nursing a crying child. Ascending one or two steps leading from the little passage to the garret, and listening attentively, I heard Winter's voice with perfect distinctness.

“ ‘Don't be a fool,’ he said. ‘What's the use of talking in that way? You know well enough I haven't had a sixpence for months

past. I couldn't keep myself: how the devil was I to keep you?"

"I could not hear the answer.

" 'You don't blame me? Yes you do—it's all the same. D—n it, you cry directly I come near you, and say you wish you were dead. By God! I wish you were dead—you have been a d—d plague to me.'

"Again something was said; but I could hear nothing except the faintest murmur.

" 'Something for the child?' said Winter, apparently repeating the words. "Blast the child! you know it isn't mine. Why don't you ask for yourself? I came on purpose to bring you money. See here, there's enough to keep you for a twelvemonth, and it's the last you'll get, for I'm off to-night; and it's likely enough we shan't ever meet again.'

"I heard the chinking of sovereigns as if thrown upon a bed, or something soft. Immediately afterwards the door opened. I prepared to escape, as I did not wish to be

found eaves-dropping. But the voice which before was inaudible I now heard addressing Winter in these words :

“ ‘ It is true—we shall never meet again. For all you have done to me, may God forgive you as I forgive you. For the wrong you have done to this child—for all it has, and shall suffer through you—mark me !—one, whose name and blood shall be the same as his, will some day punish you or yours with tenfold worse infliction !’

“ Oh, Heaven ! how did I hear that sentence to the end without losing for ever the power to hear again. With what agony did every accent pierce me ! Louisa, my wife ! Once innocent—I cannot write—* * * * Winter jostled me as he rushed down the stairs. My actions were mechanical ; I had ceased to reason. As I tracked him thither, so I tracked him back—he ran, I ran. He had recognized me in the house, I knew as much. He called a cab ; in imitation, I procured another. He drove at a gallop.

“ ‘ Follow him !’ I screamed to the driver, putting my purse into his hand as I spoke. ‘ Follow for ever,’ I said, pointing to the cab that was galloping away.

“ On we dashed. How delightful to me the maddening noise and rattle of the wheels ! I saw we lost nothing, we gained nothing.

“ ‘ On !’ I screamed. ‘ Faster ! faster !’

“ His horse was flagging — slightly we gained. Still the wheels flew round, and the noise was deafening, when a crash, a throw, a sudden check, and I was lying on the pavement bruised and shaken.

“ ‘ Is he killed ?’ asked the crowd.

“ ‘ Where do you live ?’ said the cabman.

“ I told him by an effort, as if from him alone I had any hope of assistance.

“ ‘ What’ll your honour pay if I find him yet ?’

“ ‘ Anything !—everything !’ I said, grasping his arm. ‘ Here’s my watch !’

“ ‘He’s a madman broke loose!’ exclaimed several voices in the crowd.

“ ‘What’s the matter, Sir?’ said a policeman, taking tightly hold of me.

“ ‘He’s all right,’ says the cabman. ‘Lives at No. 10, D—— Street. Quite harmless!’ Then turning to me: ‘I knows the number of t’other cab, your honour. If you’ll pay, that’ll be right enough.’

“ These words quieted me. I was put into another vehicle, and conveyed to my lodgings.

“ Here I sat looking out of window for I know not how many hours. I was conscious only of my landlord occasionally putting his head in, to see how I was getting on. By degrees, the occurrences of the afternoon became more and more intelligible, till at last every trifling incident recurred to me as accurately as I have related them to you.

“ In this state of mind, I grew more and more impatient to hear from the cabman,

who had promised to find out where Winter had gone. I listened to the sound of every carriage-wheel, I watched every foot-passenger in hopes he would knock at our street-door. I paced up and down the rooms, biting my nails and lips till they bled. I laid my watch on the table, then walked with it in my hand, keeping my eyes on the ticking seconds. Every minute that passed was placing so many miles between me and Winter. The fulfilment of my wife's prediction seemed to depend on me alone. It was a sort of commandment unknowingly made to me, the keeping of which would, in a measure, atone for my having deserted her. If I neglected to accomplish it, my child—and now I knew it to be mine—his sufferings would be upon my head. Still no news came.

“I was on the point of returning to the wretched house in Westminster, but despair seized me, as I felt it would be impossible to find the way to it. I had taken no notice of

the streets or buildings as I followed Winter. I had never seen that part of the town before; and its intricate courts and alleys formed a labyrinth in which I should have lost myself in a few minutes. Presently it was a relief to me that I could not find my wife. I dared not see her—I could not see her—I could not trust myself with her. She had money to change her abode. If I caught Winter, there would be a chance of finding her again afterwards. To pursue him must be my only object.

“It was past eleven at night, when a loud knock shook the very room in which I sat. I heard the cabman ask for me, and in an instant, I had shown him into my room, and shut the door.

“ ‘Well!’ I exclaimed, in breathless anxiety, ‘what news?’

“ ‘What’ll your honour pay for it, if it’s good?’ said the cabman, twisting his hat about, and grinning with the determination

of making a good bargain before he released me from my suspense.

“ ‘Anything you please! — but quick— out with it! Where is he gone?’

“ ‘And then there’s my cab, your honour. The off-wheel’s completely smashed, and one of the shafts is broke, and the paint is dreadful scratched. It’ll take me a matter of three pound ten or fifteen shillings to put that straight.’

“ ‘Well, well! I’ll pay it all! But in Heaven’s name, tell me at once where he is gone to, or I won’t pay you a fraction.’

“ ‘Well, your honour, they went to Euston Square railway station.’

“ ‘To Euston station!’ I answered, with a groan. ‘Is that all you have found out?’

“ ‘Not quite,’ answered the cabman, with an expression of countenance that inspired me with fresh hope.

“ ‘What else?’

“ ‘Why, your honour, the gentleman

wouldn't give the driver as much as he ought, so the driver followed him into the place where they take the tickets, and there he heard him take a second-class for ——.'

"The station he named was the nearest to ——. Winter had gone to Mossbank.

" 'Have you got a cab here?' I asked.

" 'No, Sir; but I can fetch one in half a minute. It is too late for the mail train, and there's no more till the morning. If you like, I'll be here to take you to Euston Square in time for the first train to-morrow.'

"There was nothing else to be done. I engaged him as he proposed, and before twelve next day I was at Mossbank.

"I did not wish to encounter Mr. Bel-lerby, and fortunately succeeded in obtaining a private interview with Mobbs. As I anticipated, Winter had left almost immediately after his arrival. He had stopped here on his way out of the country, to make a last attempt to extract more money from his father's partner. I could not help being

struck with this fresh proof of the man's hardihood. He knew he was pursued by me; he knew that if taken, he was amenable to the severest penalties of the law; and every hour he remained in the country, he hazarded not only his liberty, but all that he had endangered it for. Yet he stopped to make this desperate attempt.

“The prying curiosity of Mobbs put him on the alert, the instant Winter's presence became known to him. Winter had partly laid aside his disguise, but was still so marked by certain changes, which he could not alter, that Mobbs' suspicions were sufficiently roused to determine him to keep a close watch upon his actions. It happened, when Winter reached Mossbank, Mr. Bellerby was from home. He was at a neighbour's house in the town. The attorney's daughter was alone. Winter's former intimacy enabled him to seek Miss Bellerby's presence without even the ceremony of being announced.

“Miss Bellerby (all this I learned from Mobbs) received him with cordiality. Time was precious to him. He could not trifle. Apparently, the very chance he had sought for was open to him. If he could obtain the pledge of her hand before her father's return, he might sell her again to him for a larger sum than he could extort by any other device !

“He told Miss Bellerby to ask for no explanation as to his strange appearance, or to the sudden resolve upon which he was acting. He recalled to her remembrance their long intimacy, the attachment of their childhood, and the many little proofs of a devotion he had not dared to utter until now. He expatiated on the unalterable nature of his affection ; he showed how he had tried himself by long absence ; how, although he had lived much in the world, she alone had ever touched his heart. He spoke of the advantages, of the happiness, which must result from their union, and

implored her to listen to him, and to yield to his entreaties at once without waiting for the consent of her father, who, he believed, had some trifling prejudice, which would be easy to overcome thereafter.

“She heard him to the end, with astonishment. Her reply was that he had taken her completely by surprise; that, at present, she begged him not to press the matter—if he did so, she must finally and positively refuse again to see him. She was not disposed to listen to such an unexpected declaration, she was astonished that he should have taken such an advantage of her father’s absence. Without her father’s consent, she would do nothing, She must leave him till he returned. Upon this Winter detained her. He pressed his suit with still greater vehemence. Mobbs, frightened by his knowledge of Winter’s character, ran into the town to fetch Mr. Bellerby. The old man hastened home in the greatest terror for his daughter’s safety. As he entered his house,

he heard a cry for help. He rushed into the room, and was only just in time to save his daughter from the rude violence of her insulter.

“Winter fled instantly; and once more, through the intervention of Mobbs, I tracked his movements to this port. Chance seems as favourable to him as it is adverse to me. He reached this at the moment a steamer was leaving for France. I have received intelligence I can rely upon, that he embarked in her. The next boat going hence to the same destination sails to-morrow. My fixed resolution is to follow, till I overtake him.

“I have written a long letter; but you little know the consolation it is to me when I reflect, there is one person in the world who will sympathise with me. I would write on till the last hour of my stay here, so much does the occupation beguile the tediousness of the hours; but I have already trespassed too long on your patience, therefore, with reluctance, I put down my pen.

“Dare I ask you, before I do so, to make some slight effort to discover the miserable dwelling in Westminster, which contains all that was once dear to me? Perhaps, the police might assist you: I feel I never could bring myself to look upon *her* again; but the child—if you could find it, and save it from the life of shame and infamy I have seen such children trained to, God will reward you.

“I hope soon to return; if I do, I will never leave the country for India, till I have provided for my boy. Perhaps I may take him with me; but this cannot be while his poor mother lives. You shall be regularly apprized of my movements. Before you receive this, I hope to be half-way across the Channel.

“Yours faithfully, and most indebted,

“——.”

Pierce read this long letter to the end, which augmented in interest as the unhappy

Taylor seemed on the point of wreaking his vengeance. Each new disclosure made Winter's character more and more detestable. Reflecting on such a character, his chief astonishment was at a duplicity which had so successfully deceived him up to the end of their acquaintance. He could hardly recognize the polished gentleman he had been in the habit of seeing daily, as the same man whom Taylor had described using the language of a ruffian to the woman in the garret, or violently struggling to pollute the chaste lips of Mary Bellerby with the foul embrace of lust. He no longer sought an explanation to her embarrassment, when Winter's name turned up on the cover of a piece of music: it was a virtuous indignation, and not a guilty conscience, that caused the change of manner he had so ungenerously misinterpreted. He shuddered to think how narrowly she had escaped the fate of Winter's other victims.

Then he took up the letter, and read a

second time the description of Taylor's first encounter with Winter; his conscience smote him as he pictured to himself the scene witnessed by Taylor in the Westminster hovel. Had he listened at first to the poor woman's solicitations, how much misery might he have rescued her from? He had put off going to see her till perhaps it was too late. But was it too late? It was ten days since Taylor wrote. He looked to see what o'clock it was: he could not go that night; he decided, therefore, to wait till morning.

CHAPTER III.

BEFORE going to bed, he answered Longvale's and Lady Pumpton's letters. He thanked Arthur for the offer of his rooms, and told him, without mentioning to what amount, that he had been a considerable sufferer through Winter's rascality. He spoke of giving up his clubs, and society in general, and confidentially avowed his intention of living economically for some time.

He made no allusion to Lady Eda, though he read and re-read the passage in

Arthur's letter which related to her ; thinking as he did so, how selfish it was to take pleasure in hearing she was sometimes sad at the mention of his name. "And yet, dear child," he exclaimed, "the clouds of memory pass quickly over your sunny being, and all is bright again as ever."

To Lady Pumpton he "regretted that absence had prevented him receiving her note in time to answer it sooner. He was much flattered if his society could possibly be agreeable to her ladyship, and would do himself the honour to call to-morrow or the next day."

He smiled as he folded this note. "Yes," thought he, "you will, at least serve to distract me. I dare say you will be glad to enrol me in the list of your cavaliers, though you would have despised the notion of marrying anybody but a Lord. Ha ! ha ! I verily believe I was jackanapes enough to think of falling in love with you once myself. Old Johnson said marriages would be as

well assorted if the couples were matched by the Lord Chancellor. I'faith, I believe there's some truth in it! Fancy now, if I had married that woman, what a life she would have led me! The chances are, we should have been two again within six weeks of the day we were made one. And yet I certainly was within an ace of falling in love with her. What fools we are, to be sure! and all for a pretty face! In cool blood, one knows that beauty is the most dangerous, and the most ephemeral attraction a woman can possess; yet, withal, one snaps at the bait when the hook is as clear as daylight. Upon my word, I hardly know a very pretty woman who has anything to recommend her but her good looks. They either trust so much to their charms, that by long disuse their faculties die away; or else an even-handed Providence, in bestowing beauty of person on some, gives the beauties of the heart and mind to others. Eda is an exception, to be sure; but then, she is one

in ten thousand. She is not only more than beautiful, but—heigho!—well, well, it's all for the best, that's one consolation.

“I wonder whether she ever will get married; perhaps Arthur—but she's a thousand times too good for him. 'Tis hateful to think she should ever marry a swell! Miserable wretches, who are fit for nothing but to fall in love with themselves. But money—money goes a long way too. Arthur is certainly the least unworthy of any man I know. But who the deuce is worthy of her? that's the question. No man in the world! No, she's an exception! Then, this is the worst of these exceptions; they ought to have belonged to another world. They have no business to come and tantalize and disappoint us here. For in truth, I can't conceive how such a woman as Eda Longvale could make any man, practically speaking, a good wife—that is to say, as long as the affairs of this world compelled him to share with her his concern in them.

“One forgets, when thinking of marrying such creatures, how very common-place some part of the business is, when done. What a blow to romance it must be, for instance, to have to scold such a woman because she forgot to tell the cook to put onions into the bread sauce. Why the bare notion of eating at all is looked upon, at one period of the sentiment, as a vulgar necessity of the most unromantic description : but that eating should ever come to be an important item in domestic comfort ; and that onions, of all things under the moon, should be essential to a man’s happiness, is at least humiliating. Depend upon it, what a man wants is a good sensible sort of a woman, not very pretty, not very plain ; not very clever, not stupid ; not domineering, not submissive ; affectionate, not doting ; amiable and sweet-tempered, but not insipid nor without spirit. The reverses of these qualities are all objectionable.

“What a frightful nuisance it would be to

have a whimsical wife, who saw everything in a different light from anybody else; or to have a beautiful wife, whom every friend fell in love with while young, and who, when old, became, as all faded beauties do, sour as a crab. No less disagreeable would it be to have a wife so ugly, that you were ashamed of bringing her into society; convinced if you did so, that people would wonder what on earth could have induced you to marry such a woman. A very clever wife is objectionable, because she patronizes her husband's abilities, and with equal pertinacity write sonnets to the moon, lectures on the atomic theory, or objects to the 'tendency of profits to a minimum.' A stupid wife is a bore, for she cannot tell why anything is, and what is worse, does not want to know. Worse still is one who wears the—Bloomer affairs; or one so universally obedient, as to destroy all pleasure in being obeyed; so doting, that her admiration makes you ridiculous; so unsympathizing, that

you were none the better for being married, or so ill-tempered that you were a thousand times worse off than ever.

“However, ‘for better for worse’—as the ceremony has it—when done, there’s no undoing of it. It seems a pity, too, when one thinks how badly matched some people are; yet, after all, opposite natures meet at last. Long attrition must smoothe the most uneven surfaces. Everything that can’t be avoided becomes a matter of course, and fate, as it appears, manages all these things for us. This again is always an odd thought, to reflect that if I am destined to be married to any woman, there is that woman destined to be married to me. Perhaps we have never seen one another—never heard of one another—yet safe enough, when the time comes, she and no other will be my wife, I and no other shall be her husband; and both of us a thousand times have fancied a wife or a husband as unlike either as anything

can be. I wonder whether I shall ever marry, and whether my wife will be at all like Eda."

Here Pierce's pipe came to an end, and his reflections also. He meditated filling it a second time; but sighed to himself:

"Heigho! how excessively pleasant it would be if I had a nice little wife to come up and say: 'Now, Pierce, you must not smoke any more, dear boy;' when I should resign the pipe like a martyr, and receive a kiss from the dearest little woman in the world as a reward for my wonderful self-denial. Well! as there's no Mrs. M. to please, I will imagine one, and smoke no more."

Thus saying, Pierce retired to his slumbers; where, amongst the many Mrs. M's. who figured in the pleasant character he had last drawn, there was none so prominent as Lady Eda, notwithstanding her supposed unfitness for the situation. Sometimes her indistinct form assumed a look of Mary Bellerby: but with the change there sprung up a host of

phantoms with villainous faces, and always amongst them Winter, disguised like a dirty German. There was a dark garret, Winter was in it, and from out the room came shrieks of a woman being murdered; as she shrieked, Winter's curses were mingled with the woman's cries for him. But he was pinned down and could not stir, nor speak; and she was dying because he could not help her. The dream seemed to have lasted all night; for when he woke it was daylight, and before he could remember in what strange place he had been sleeping, he was not quite sure his dream had not been reality.

Some one was already up and moving about the house; so he rose and dressed, and telling Mrs. Daniels he should be back to breakfast in an hour, examined Taylor's letters to make sure of the address, and walked over to Westminster.

The remembrance of his dream made him hasten his steps, as if a few minutes were now of importance, when he had neglected

the matter for a couple of months. By asking the way, and bearing in mind Taylor's description of the place, he at last discovered the house he sought for. The door still hung from one hinge, and convinced by this sign that he was right, he entered the passage and knocked at the inner door.

"Come in," said a feeble voice.

"Who lives here?" inquired Pierce, looking in, and observing a sickly young woman nursing a baby.

"Me, Sir," she answered.

"And who else?" said Pierce.

"A lodger up-stairs, Sir. Poor creature, she's very bad. I haven't seen her this morning; but I thought, last night, when I went to bed, she wouldn't live through the night. I can't nurse her much, baby's so sickly, and so is the boy, and I am only poorly myself. Are you the doctor, please Sir?"

"Yes," said Pierce hesitatingly, thinking it the best excuse for his intrusion. "Is she alone?"

“Yes, Sir, quite alone, except her little boy, poor child; he comes down here to play with mine as soon as he’s about, but I suppose he ain’t awake yet. You’ll see the door, Sir, at the top of them stairs.”

“I’ll come and look at you afterwards,” said Pierce, as he left the room.

“Thank you kindly, Sir,” said the woman.

Ascending a staircase not much broader, and nearly as straight as a ladder, More pushed open the door which abutted, not on a landing, but directly on the first step. This admitted him to a low garret, with a sloping roof. Through a small frame of bull’s-eye glass let into this roof, the few rays of light entered, by which alone the objects in the room were made visible. It was a dark, rainy morning, so that it required a few seconds to accustom him to the gloom of the chamber, before he could distinguish any of its contents. The want of light did not, however, conceal from him the close and almost foetid state of the atmosphere. Moving

as noiselessly as he was able, his first care was to set the door wide open, convinced that nothing could be more essential to the sick woman than an admission of fresh air. He then began to examine the apartment, which by this time his accustomed sight enabled him faintly to see into. Apparently, it contained no furniture of any kind; and indeed the room seemed to be entirely empty. On looking closer he observed a mattress in one corner, on which two figures—evidently the mother and her little son, were reclining. He was rather surprised that his entrance had not disturbed them, and listened attentively for the breathing of heavy sleep.

No sound of wheels ever vibrated near the quarter in which that house stood. Not the smallest noise was audible, except the pattering of the fine rain on the bull's-eye glass, and the falling of the water-drops as they trickled from the rotten rafters. His heart beat with apprehension as he knelt beside the mattress to catch the breath of the sleepers. The

soft respiration of the child for the moment relieved his fears. He was still in uncertainty. Slipping off his shoes he stole down stairs and, borrowing a rush candle, returned and again knelt at the side of the mattress.

Cautiously shrouding the faint gleam from the face of the child, he gradually disclosed the light till it fell full upon the face of the mother. He started with a thrill of horror at the first sight of the rigid features, that, with glazed and open eyes, stared directly at him. Fascinated by the look, he kept the light still thrown upon them. The mouth was tightly compressed, but the face was so fleshless that not alone the jaws, but the bones of the front teeth distinctly showed through the skinny lips. The eyeballs started from their hollow sockets ; the hands were clenched ; every limb was stiffly stretched ; and the whole body bore symptoms of the fearful spasm that had left it lifeless.

Extinguishing the taper, he drew a covering over the face of the corpse, and raising the

child in his arms had descended to the street before the boy awoke.

“Where’s mammy?” cried the child, looking with astonishment and alarm at the stranger.

“She’s fast asleep, my little man,” answered Pierce, “you mustn’t cry or you will—” he was going to say “wake her,” but he dared not. “I am a great friend of mamma’s, and I am to take you to my pretty house, and show you all sorts of pretty things. You will like to come out for a day, won’t you?”

“And will mammy come too?” asked the child, incredulously.

“No,” said Pierce, “mammy’s very ill; but she asked me to take you with me, to show you my pretty house.”

“No, no, no,” and the child began to cry.

Pierce led him to the door of the room down-stairs; then leaving him for a minute with another child of about the same age,

called the sickly woman aside to speak to her.

“She’s dead, poor thing,” whispered Pierce. “I will take the child home with me, and will send proper people to see that the body is decently interred.”

“Thank you kindly, gentleman,” said the poor woman, as if this promise had relieved her from a serious responsibility. “Poor thing!” she added, “it’s very shocking. She was very unfortunate, and I believe come to be so through a strange man as used to call here to see her sometimes.”

“Ah! I know all about it,” said Pierce.

“Do you, Sir?” submissively replied the woman.

“But how,” asked Pierce, “am I to get the little boy to go with me? I am afraid he won’t leave his mother.”

“Won’t he go, poor child?” said the woman, smiling meekly with the consciousness that she knew a secret method of inducing him to go.

“ Here, Johnny ” she called, opening the door, and letting the child out, “ this is the gentleman who has all the beautiful cakes, and he wants you to go and eat some of ’em for him.”

“ Does he ? ” said Johnny, putting his hand into his mouth, and hanging down his head in an attitude of reluctance.

“ Let me go too, mother,” said the other half-starved urchin. “ I’ll go and eat the cakes, mother.”

“ What ! and leave your mother all alone ? No, Tommy, you won’t do that, will you ? We’ll have some cakes another day, my pet.”

And here the poor woman turned her head to hide tears which fell fast as she remembered she had no bread for her little son, much less a cake. Pierce slipped half-a-crown into her hand, and led Johnny away.

The child trotted merrily along, as he prefigured to himself the interior of the confectioner’s shop where he was to spend the day.

"Is it far?" he presently inquired, as his patience diminished with the distance to the supposed shop of promise.

"No, my boy, close to now," replied Pierce.

"How far?" inquired Johnny, after another five minutes' walk, which brought them to the door of More's lodgings.

"Here we are, at home," said Pierce, as he rang the bell for admittance.

"Is this a cake shop?" asked Johnny, with an alarmed look of anxiety.

"Not a cake shop, but we will soon send for some."

As he spoke, Mrs. Daniels opened the door, and with an exclamation of surprise, made way for her new lodger, and his unexpected companion.

"Have you any cake in the house?" asked Pierce of the landlady.

"Yes, Sir, I've a nice new seed pound; do you wish it for breakfast?" she answered, looking hard at the face of the child, then

taking a cursory glance at the features of her lodger with a view of discovering a family likeness, if there was any.

“If you please,” said Pierce, beckoning the child to follow him to his rooms.

The breakfast-table was laid; the fire burnt brightly; the kettle hissed on the hob; and Pierce rejoiced in his heart for his little guest's sake that the apartment looked so comfortable. Johnny, who had never in his life—at least within the reach of his memory—witnessed such a scene of luxury and magnificence, stared about him, fully prepared to see the whole apparatus of the breakfast-table whisked up the chimney in a cloud of steam or a clap of thunder. For so sudden had been his transition from the wretched hovel in Westminster, and so extremely limited was his knowledge of the world beyond it, that the dwelling-place of the being who had carried him off, convinced him he was in the hands of some genie or magician, about whom his mother had told

him such wonderful stories before she was too ill to amuse him.

From the breakfast-table he looked to the kettle, from the kettle he cautiously turned his eyes upon More; here he kept them fixed till he was released from the apprehension that he should presently experience the charming sensation of being torn to pieces by pointed fangs, and demolished without the appropriate embellishments of pepper and salt. A smile from the mouth of the genie disclosed a set of teeth much too white and regular for the jaws of a cannibal, and with the smile there proceeded also an invitation in gentle tones to approach the fire and warm himself.

At first, Johnny was more than half disposed to preserve his present security by still keeping the table between him and the imaginary ogre. But forgetting his fears in contemplation of the kindly expression which played about Pierce's face, he began his approach at the happy moment that the

cakes, muffins, and eggs were brought in by Mrs. Daniels. Nor had she forgotten to bring up at the same time a small-sized cup and saucer, a small plate, and a small knife and fork, for the use of Mr. More's little friend.

Pierce thanked Mrs. Daniels for her considerateness, and Mrs. Daniels dropped a curtsey.

"What a lovely child," ventured the landlady, putting one hand under Johnny's chin, and parting the curls from his forehead with the other. Pierce could see plain enough that Mrs. Daniels was nearly exploding with curiosity. "Quite bootiful, I declare," she exclaimed, growing rapturous. "I think I do, Sir," said Mrs. Daniels, retiring a step, and looking alternately from Pierce to the child—"Yes, I thinks I sees it."

"See what?" said Pierce.

"Why, lor, Sir, the likeness, to be sure, them's your hies to a shade, and them little noses allust grows up such as yourn."

Pierce had a strong inclination to burst out laughing at the announcement of this ingenious discovery, but it occurred to him that it was not the least worth while to disturb Mrs. Daniels' conjectures: for, whatever they were, it would be far more convenient to assent to them than to account for the child's history by confiding only a part of the truth, or by the invention of an elaborate fiction. He therefore replied he was much flattered by the opinion.

"I guesst as much," returned the dame, accepting the reply as an affirmative, "I guesst as much when I see you bring him in. But, lor, poor child, what a state he's in, to be sure. The child's clothes is worn off his back, I declare, and I'm sure he haven't had his face washed this six weeks. Where have he been to?"

This last interrogative was thrown out as a mere exclamation with the most artful carelessness; and Mrs. Daniels began to busy herself by untying a knot in the strings of

Johnny's pinafore, devoutly hoping Pierce would not suffer the exclamation to pass unheeded. Her surmises were correct ; for, seeing the child's sordid looks would sooner or later have to be accounted for, he answered with a well-feigned air of mystery, and, lowering his voice at the same time to prevent it reaching any ears but Mrs. Daniels', said,

“His poor mother's death, and my compulsory absence, is all I can tell you. I feel sure, Mrs. Daniels, that I may ask you, once for all, never to remind me or the child of the painful loss. I mention this to you, because I believe with *you* my *secret* is safe. My chief object in taking your lodgings has been to forget if possible my altered state, and there is nothing in which you can so oblige me as by helping to make this poor child forget a loss which as yet it is hardly sensible of.”

He had scarcely left off speaking, before he remarked that the affecting communication had brought tears from the kind heart of

Mrs. Daniels, all the way to the tip of her nose. Having rubbed that prominent feature with the palm of her hand, she replied in a whisper that the secret would be fully as safe with her as with the dead : in which promise Pierce placed perfect reliance, not being aware that he had as yet imparted any secret to be revealed.

His words, however, had the desired effect. Mrs. Daniels considered herself in the light of a confidante, and from this moment she resolutely determined that no power on earth should wring from her what, in truth, she knew nothing more of now than before. One thing she had learnt was that the child had lost its mother ; and being of a most motherly disposition herself, she thought there was no way in which she could so effectually co-operate with Mr. More in making the child forget the loss, as by performing to the best of her power all the offices of a parent ; offices which she kept in daily practice, much to the advantage of the

hopeful Master Daniels. Esteeming herself forthwith *in loco parentis* to little Johnny, the first object of her maternal solicitude was to effect a speedy amendment in the outer child. Her propositions to that end were moved with so much earnestness, that Pierce thought it wiser to submit to a cold breakfast than to thwart the amiable intentions of his landlady. Johnny, who all this time had an affectionate eye and a watery mouth for the cake, and was wondering what supernatural interest could keep Pierce away from his muffins, found his hand at the end of the conference suddenly grasped in the stout fin of his self-appointed parent, and without further explanation, requested to "come along like a little dear." The request, as may be supposed, was a purely supererogatory matter of form; for, to use a nautical expression, when Mrs. Daniels had once "made fast," and had commenced the process of "hauling taught," remonstrance would have been vain.

Casting therefore one of those agonizing

glances at the cake which a romantic swain usually bestows upon the adored object he is never to see again, Johnny went along as much like "a little dear" as could possibly have been expected. A better educated child we are convinced would, under these aggravating circumstances, have made an affecting appeal to his tormentors, by giving way to his own feelings in the loudest roar his lungs could produce. But children taught in the severe schools of poverty, as Johnny had been, learn by experience that tears are not marketable commodities; and, far from passing as a current medium for cakes and apples, more frequently purchase nothing but cuffs and chastisements.

Who can forget the suffocating influences of soap-suds when stuffed by handfuls into nose and mouth? Who can forget the exquisite twinge when that useful solution of metallic alkalis and fat was brought into contact with the mucous membrane of his eye? the drowning sensation

of the after ablution, and the final process of being flayed alive by a rough towel?—an instrument of torture so successful for its purpose, that, had he lived in these days, Apollo would unquestionably have chosen it for the operation upon his rival flute-player.

All these pleasures were the more appreciated by Johnny, in that he had been totally unused to any treatment of the kind; and, as in war against barbarous nations, we first riddle the limbs of the savage with our bullets and then place him in the hands of our surgeons to heal, he thinks the last torture more unbearable than the wound—so Johnny, who from his heart despised soap and water, deemed the operation of being cleaned a refinement of cruelty not to have been expected from the most inhuman disposition.

He submitted, however, like a true hero, and from the tub was removed to the inside of a suit of clothes belonging to Master Daniels. That young gentleman being five years older

than Johnny, and proportionably five years larger, the borrowed habiliments, though much contributing to cleanliness of appearance, were by no means calculated to show off the symmetry of his form. When, therefore, he returned to the breakfast-room in charge of his body-guard, the remarkable figure he presented, and the excessive gravity of his small face, buried in the collar of the jacket, caused Pierce to laugh heartily.

“There,” said Mrs. Daniels, her features beaming with honest pride, “that looks something like ; now don’t it, Sir?”

“Yes,” said Pierce ; “but I am sure I don’t know what. Now, Johnny, I dare say you are ready for your breakfast ; so let us begin.”

Johnny needed no second invitation, but set to work with an earnestness which promised soon to fill up the discrepancy between him and his outer garments. First the cake was the sole mistress of his affections—then the rival allurements of the eggs and bacon

swayed his heart, and filled his stomach. Mrs. Daniels simpered benignly ; and Pierce thanked Providence for having placed it in his power to perform so gratifying an act of charity.

When the breakfast things were removed, Mrs. Daniels suggested the advisability of conducting Johnny to the kitchen, that he might lose no time in making the acquaintance of her own son. She hoped if Mr. More had any objection to the young gentleman's associating with his inferiors, he would express himself accordingly ; and, without waiting for Pierce's answer, took the occasion to pass a few select encomiums on the notified respectability of the name and family of the Daniels.

To all these remarks Pierce assented with polite nods, judiciously interspersed at proper intervals. The result was, Johnny went below to join his new playmate, and Pierce was left to deliberate upon his responsible office of guardian.

CHAPTER IV.

THE position in which he found himself placed was both novel and interesting. To watch over the interests of the child was an occupation that would at least distract his attention from his own misfortunes. What a change he had undergone in the last few months! For the first time in his life, he was doing some real good. He had motives for action not purely selfish. He was reduced from affluence to poverty. He had suffered privations which two months past, merely to think of, would have made life unbearable; yet was he better satisfied with himself, and had better materials for hap-

piness than he had had to all appearance for many years.

It is easy to recognize the secret of his improvement in the reward of his conduct. He had not only done well, but was about to do still more good. From the lot of the boy and the fate of his parents, his thoughts reverted to the sickly woman whom he had promised to revisit; he remembered also the very disagreeable task which devolved upon him of making arrangements with an undertaker for the burial of Johnny's mother. Then for the first time it occurred to him, when thinking of the expenses of the funeral, that the last sum of money given by Winter could not yet have been spent. A fear crossed his mind lest, on finding the gold, the temptation of keeping it should have been beyond the poor woman's power of resistance. In such a case he would be deprived of both means and inclination to relieve her as he had intended. Gratified with the first delights which immediately follow an act of

generosity, and anxious to satisfy himself that his suspicions of the woman's honesty were groundless, he hastened out to put in execution the projects of his kindly impulse.

Stopping at the first house, over whose door was placed the announcement that funerals were carefully attended to, he entered ; and, applying for one of the workmen, conducted him at once to the hovel where lay the body. The sickly tenant of the ground floor welcomed Pierce with a feeble smile ; she begged him to step in, and, resigning for his use the only chair in the room, seated herself on the side of a small empty box which usually served as a footstool while she nursed her baby. The dimensions of the chamber wherein they sat could not have been more than eight or nine feet square, and about six feet high. A chest of drawers, a bed, a table, and the one chair, left little space to move in. The height of the room, too, was diminished on the present occasion by some wet rags,

a pair of stockings, and a gown suspended from the low ceiling to dry. The door was closed, the window was nailed down, there was a fire in the grate, and the wet clothes steamed heavily. The atmosphere nearly choked Pierce, and an unpleasant apprehension of measles, scarlet fever, and especially that beauty-killer, the small-pox, occurred to him in the most lively colours. The baby began to cry.

“Poor little thing,” said Pierce, “is it hungry?”

“Well, Sir, it ain’t exactly that, I think; it’s a-coming all over spots. I’ll show it to you, Sir.”

“Ah! never mind,” said Pierce, feeling a creeping sensation down his back, “never mind uncovering it.”

“Oh, Sir, you’d better see it. I should wish for you to see it.”

Pierce forgot he was a doctor, and had to examine the spots.

“It frets dreadful, and I am sure I don’t

know what to do for it. We had the small-pox in the yard about three weeks since. I lost my eldest boy ; but I don't think this is small-pox. I expect it's thrush, Sir."

"Ah ! I expect it is," said Pierce, who had never heard of the thrush affecting children before. He groaned inwardly as he made up his mind to be pitted and scarred for life.

"What had I better do for it, Sir?"

He remembered once having a horse doctored for thrush in the feet.

"I think you had better rub it well with vitriol and tar," he suggested, recollecting two of the ingredients of the thrush paste.

"With what did you say, please Sir?" asked the poor woman in terrified accents.

"Vitriol and tar, I believe, is a common remedy," said Pierce ; "but however, I had better consult some other professional man before you do anything for it. And now

tell me," he continued, anxious to change a subject he was anything but at ease upon, "tell me how you manage to live here. You seem to be getting on very badly in this rotten old house."

"We do, indeed, Sir, very badly; and, to be sure, the old house is dreadful rotten. I'm quite afraid when it come on bad weather, lest the whole place should tumble down and smother us, it do shake and tremble so; and then the drains is so bad, it's enough to poison us sometimes. If you step into the passage, I'll show you where the smells come from, Sir."

"Ah! they come from the passage, do they?" said Pierce, again in alarm. "It is a great nuisance, I'll be bound; but we must see if we can't have that mended. Won't your landlord do anything for you to alter these things, and make you more comfortable?"

"Why, you see, Sir," and the poor creature held down her head as she spoke, "I

am so badly off, and can't hardly get enough to live upon—and—I do all the work I can, but it's only now and then as I gets a shirt to make, and then I sets up all night to finish it; and what with the worretting of the children, and giving food to the baby, I get quite bad, and can't earn much, Sir—and—”

“And what?” said Pierce, seeing she hesitated.

“And then I haven't paid no rent for a long time, and the landlord he threatens to have the law of me. I daresn't go to him for no repairs and such like.”

“And what is your rent?” asked Pierce, to whom the particulars of these sorts of miseries were altogether unknown.

“Three shillings a week, Sir, for the house. I let the bed-room up-stairs to that poor woman for eighteen pence; but, poor thing, she never couldn't pay a single penny, not since she first come into it, that's six weeks or more ago, and I hadn't the

heart to turn her out, she was so ill, and so gentlelike and quiet. Perhaps I might get a lodger now she's dead and gone. If it wasn't for these children, I wish I was dead and gone too. This is a hard world for some, and I don't see how such as me could be sorry to leave it. Tommy! don't you do that, or I'll beat you."

This interjectory remark, accompanied with an abrupt change of voice and manner, was addressed to the half-starved urchin who had improved the opportunity which the above colloquy afforded, by a stealthy effort to obtain possession of about half a loaf of bread, placed out of the child's reach on the top of the chest of drawers. The child crept down, and hiding a wry face in the corner, began to cry in perfect silence.

"What's the matter?" asked Pierce.

"He wants the bread, poor child," replied the mother; "he's hungry, that's all, Sir." Then turning to Tommy: "You shan't have a morsel till dinner-time. You ought to

know better than behave so when the gentleman's here, you ought. I am ashamed of you. He don't know no better, poor child," she added apologetically.

"But," said Pierce, "doesn't the parish give you anything?"

"Yes, Sir, they did use to give me a loaf of bread once a week, and they allowed me a few coals last winter; but the winter is coming on again now, Sir, and they say I'm not to have any this year. They took away the order for bread. You see, Sir, they says I don't belong to the parish, and they can't help them as don't belong to the parish. The clergyman, Mr. Fennings, I think his name is, Sir, he've been very kind to me. He give me an order for tea and sugar sometimes, Sir, and sometimes an order for soup. He's given me money to buy clothes with, and wants to send my little boy to the Ragged School; but the child's too young yet. Oh yes! Sir, if it hadn't been for Mr. Fennings I don't know what would have

become of me, and there's many more as I knows he has done as much for; but he can't do everything for everybody, you see, Sir."

"And why don't you get to your own parish?" said Pierce.

"That's where it is, Sir," replied the woman. "My parish is somewheres in Yorkshire, and I haven't money to go. Mr. Fennings promised to send me, Sir; but he says there's some difficulty in making them take me. I was thinking of getting back to mother's, but Mr. Fennings thought I'd best to go to my husband's parish."

"And where is your husband?"

"He's dead, Sir."

Pierce was sorry for having asked the question. But those who are accustomed to misfortunes are not quite so sensitive on these points as the class in which he had lived.

"He's been dead near a twelvemonth," said the woman.

“Indeed !”

“Yes, Sir. It was last October as he died.”

“Indeed.”

“Yes, Sir. My husband played the fiddle, but he couldn’t earn enough for us both to live on; so he used to tramp about the country.”

“And what made you come to live in London?”

“My husband had at one time plenty of engagements in many of the orchestras. He was a beautiful player, I’m sure, for he play several times in the Casino band, and all such places as that; but by degrees the town got full of foreigner people, and my husband used to say they would never employ an Englishman, what though he was a better player, when there was one of them foreigners in the way. After a bit, he took to going about the country with another man and a harp, and he did better then; but it was an uncertain business, and I really think as when we couldn’t get scarce bread enough,

it made him so down to see the children starving that he died broken-hearted."

"Well," said Pierce, "I must see if I can't help you in some way, though I'm not very rich myself. And now tell me, didn't the poor creature up-stairs pay you any rent at all?"

"Rent! Sir, she never had half-a-dozen shillings since she has lived here."

"But she had a purse full of sovereigns the other day. What became of that?"

"A purse with money in it, Sir?"

"Yes. Do you not know what she did with it?"

"No, I am sure I don't, Sir; she said nothing to me about it."

"How very odd," said Pierce, unwillingly suspecting she was telling him a lie.

"Are you sure," asked the woman, "that she ever had the money?"

"Quite sure. I know for certain that the man who used to come here left it with her the last time he called. It seems to me

very strange that you should know nothing about it."

"Well, indeed I do not. If I did I would tell you the truth, Sir, that I would."

Pierce could not believe her. The deceit he felt convinced she had been guilty of vexed him. He had not sufficient ground for his suspicion to charge her openly with the theft, but he took care that the manner of his leave-taking should intelligibly express his displeasure and distrust,

As he walked away, the memory of the many deceptions practised upon him induced him to put the most uncharitable construction upon the poor woman's conduct. There certainly was no evidence whatever to justify this unfavourable mode of accounting for the lost purse. But suspicions are hard to be rid of; they defile like pitch; and for the most part are as unhappily possessed as they are unjustly conceived. He was annoyed with himself, for he had aggrieved another,

who already had more than her share of affliction. Half disposed to turn back and say a few kind words of conciliation, he was walking slowly on the pavement when a blow from the shoulder of a man running past nearly upset him into the street. He had scarcely recovered from the shock, when the cry of a dozen shrill voices sounded in his ears as a crowd of boys turned the corner of the lane behind him and scampered on as fast as their legs would carry them, screaming as they ran the well-known hue of alarm which hunts the heels of a detected pick-pocket.

“Stop thief!” shouted the gathering mob, as every fresh idler joined the chase. “Stop thief!” screamed the treble voices of the women, thrusting their heads from door and garret window. “Stop thief!” echoed the sepulchral tones of the cobbler at his stall. “Stop thief!” chimed in the children, who left their games to see the sport.

“Which way did he go?” asked three or

four at once, as the mob came up with Pierce.

"He took the first turning to the right, I think," said Pierce, "but I won't be sure; he nearly knocked me down."

"Stop thief!" shouted the mob, as they hurried on with the new scent. Forced along by the rush, Pierce had to run with the crowd. They turned as he had directed; the street was a long one, and the fugitive was just in sight as the leaders of the pursuing party doubled the corner. On they went, but the policemen had now taken up the alarm, and the frightened looks and hastening flight of the thief indicated at once the guilty object of the chase. A reinforcement of fresh hounds at every yard would soon pull down the fleetest quarry. Out of breath, and checked at every turn, the hunted man was caught.

"What has he done?" inquired the policemen.

"Nothing at all," answered the man for himself.

“What’s he stolen?” again inquired the policemen.

There was not one in the mob who could tell what he had stolen, or could even say he had stolen anything.

“What did they run you for?” asked a policeman, as if in the event of there being no other accuser, the man was the least likely to give evidence against himself.

“Blast’em, heow should I know? The ——! Neow then, why don’t yer let go on me?”

This last remark was made in tones no less polite than the language. It is possible, had he shown no symptoms of haste to be freed from detention, the policeman who held him might voluntarily have relinquished his grasp; but combined with the incivility of the supposed thief’s manner, there was also a look of anxiety and alarm, which induced the policeman to keep him in restraint for another minute or two, if for no other purpose, to give him an excellent opportunity of exercising his equanimity and

patience. As the request was not responded to by any show of concession on the policeman's part, the supposed offender now made propositions for his release in terms of a more courteous character. Finding the *suaviter in modo* equally ineffectual, he suddenly changed his tone from the insinuating to the anathematical, and, concluding the change with a round of hearty curses, finally resorted to violence, endeavouring to cast off by main force, the oppression of the constabulary yoke.

Such a demonstrative contempt for the instituted authorities was the surest means of defeating his aim. He was no match for his opponent; and not only lost his liberty in the combat, but had the misfortune to drop a purse full of sovereigns, which fell from under his waistcoat in the midst of the struggle. The treasure thus dislodged was considered by the bystanders as circumstantial evidence of the most satisfactory nature, and in truth, bore awkward testimony to his guilt.

The thief finding further resistance of no avail, submitted to the persuasive eloquence of the policeman's staff; and was in course of being removed, when Pierce, who had accidentally pushed his way to the front of the crowd, recognized in the features of the prisoner the very man whom he had a short time before engaged at the undertaker's.

Following to the police-office, he there stated the facts of the case as far as he was acquainted with them. He had conveyed the prisoner to a house, where a purse of money had that morning been missed. Soon after leaving the house, he heard the cry of "stop thief!" The man pursued was the prisoner. He had no doubt the person who first gave the alarm must have detected the prisoner in the act.

In order to ascertain the truth of this statement, he conducted a policeman to the widow's house in Westminster. The widow had gone up-stairs directly the gentleman left her, to look under the dead woman's mattress

in case the lost purse should have been hidden there. She supposed she had made very little noise as she entered the bedroom ; for she had not been observed by the thief whom she saw turning up the mattress with one hand as he held the purse in the other, apparently looking for more where he had found that. She asked him where he had got the money found. He jumped up on seeing her and, making an evasive answer, put the purse into his waistcoat and ran down-stairs. She ran after him. The alarm was soon communicated to the rest of the street. She had followed as long as she could run, then returned thinking the money was lost. All this evidence was afterwards delivered on oath before a magistrate. The prisoner was found guilty, and the purse, containing about twenty sovereigns, was given up to Pierce, as the guardian of the child to whom it belonged.

Pierce was almost as pleased as the widow at this happy discovery, which at once re-established her character for honesty ; and

from that day he became a constant visitor at the poor woman's house. He took care she never wanted for bread. In small sums paid at intervals from the recovered purse, the rent owed by the child's mother was discharged; and from his own purse he gave her little presents to buy shoes for her children, and warmer clothing for herself.

But his charity was not confined to gifts of this description. He would sit and talk with her, always leaving her much the happier for his visit. He cheered her in her resignation; he filled her mind with hopes of rest and peace eternal. He persuaded her that many of the richest were less happy than she—less happy than the poorest of the poor. He told her of trials she knew nothing of—of temptations, of vices, of neglected duty, of responsibilities, which she was exempted from. He instanced himself, and assured her she had more to hope from a future than he had.

What moments of pure joy rewarded him

for his well-doing ! yet he never felt so undeserving of them as now. His heart overflowed with self-abasement and adoration when he thought of the Divine Being, the purity of whose example awed him—yet while awing, mysteriously and lovingly drew him to itself. His life had been a life of useless sinful self-indulgence. What had he done to deserve this opportunity—this light from Heaven revealing the evil of his ways, and the paths to peace and amendment. Oh ! might these gleams be something more momentary—might they be graven in his heart to cheer him in the hour of desponding doubt—to warn him in the day of prosperity. In himself he could not trust ; he had learnt partly his feeble insufficiency. Might God uphold him by His help and strength !

Sometimes, in comparing his present lot with his past life, he remembered how charitable he had once esteemed himself for his annual small donations. And then he recalled to mind some words Mr. Gregory had

spoken to him on this subject. "The wealthy," said that good old man, "can well afford to purchase the admiration of the world by lending their *names* to the support of charitable institutions ; or, by the ostentation of their public munificence. Such sham generosity is but too frequently the forfeit-money whereby they hope to exonerate themselves from the demands of true benevolence. One act of personal kindness, one word of consolation, one short half-hour spent in the house of suffering, is truer charity, is far more in accordance with the spirit of Christianity, is often far more gratifying to the sufferer, and always a more acceptable offering to God, than tenfold the sum rendered in money."

"Many," thought Pierce to himself "feel the force of this, and few are so wanting in kindness of heart as not be willing to perform the office of Good Samaritan ; but they need the moral courage. It was, and, it is likely, would be again the same

with me. The enslaving power of society makes cowards of us. Every man in secret respects one he thinks more self-denying, more benevolent than himself. This admiration denotes a corresponding germ of goodness. He has it in himself to do the same good act, and would do it perchance, in private; but before the face of others, if it be uncustomary, he shrinks from it—he is afraid. And Fashion is the tyrant that awes him.

“The dread of being thought a hypocrite, is another enemy to virtue. One would think that no man could have such a dread, were he not a hypocrite. Yet this is not so. If a man is found, accidentally, praying in retirement, he starts up in blushes and confusion. It was not in hypocrisy that he prayed in secret, yet is he discomposed, perhaps ashamed at being thus detected. And wherefore ashamed? Is then an act of virtue, or religion, disgraceful in itself? Not so; but fashion teaches the world to scoff. And why to scoff, if in secret men do

admire virtuous actions? Simply because the exercise of virtue is *inconvenient*. It interferes too much with the business of the world. It requires self-denial. Its calls are onerous. Our purses and our time are both too short for its demands. If we stretch a point, and do that which the heart prompts us to, we are bold creatures, for, sure enough, the world will catch us tripping, and dub us hypocrites, lest too good an example should make them defaulters. The world affects to hate a liar; and why? Because the world is virtuous and truthful? Not a whit. It is because a lie is an inconvenience when they want to know only the truth. A lie misleads the world: the world is gulled by a lie; therefore they denounce lies and tellers of lies.

“But is not this scoffing, this braggadocio declaration that they are no better than they should be—is not this, when, at the same time they *would* be better if they *dared*, is not this a sneaking, cowardly, unmanly lie

—a grovelling toadyism to creatures fully as pitiful as themselves? Does any man think he was sent into the world to cringe like a slave to the basest of its fashions?—to be ashamed of virtue, because an ass in lion's skin is ashamed of virtue?—to be a scoffer because an empty-pated coxcomb is a scoffer?—to be a sceptic and a debauché, because such heroes as * * * *, think fit to make a sensation by shaming the devil, in calling the devil brother? Forsooth! the devil, if he knew them, would not be proud of the relationship! Yet fashion, says it is heroic; and who makes fashion? Wealth and wit—witless wealth—and wealthless wit. Wealth hires wit as young ladies hire dancing-masters; and wit, while laughing with its hirer, and laughing at him too, dictates to all, and, stuffed with vanity, decrees a code of vanity, and calls it fashionable. What, after all, are these clever men, who make parade and flourish of their wits? Or what, after all is the substance of their mighty intellects?

Give a dog a stick, or some such thing to carry, and mark his pompous air. If other dogs pass by him, how he curls his tail, bristles up his back, and moves along with difficulty, so overcome is he with pride. The more unwieldy his burden, the greater is his vanity. His master smiles at his conceit, and knows, that having taught this dog to fetch and carry, it would cost him little to teach a thousand to do the same. The trick which makes the brute set up his bristling pride, is held a trifling thing by him who taught, and can unteach for ever, by the simple wringing of a neck. What, then, are these poor human dogs, who, carrying an extra grain of wit, make such a strutting before their fellow-worldsmen? As little fitted to be our prophets as the four-legged animal. Courage, courage, is what we want ! I am already a happier man, since I began to make myself useful by visiting this poor creature. There's no saying how much good any man might do, if he had but

courage to set about it. May I never again be ashamed of doing openly what accident has now led me to do in private."

Such were Pierce's reflections. And, to his credit be it spoken, he persevered in his good intentions and charitable acts for no less than two or three weeks without flagging or growing weary of his cure, or wishing for any other mode of life than the one he was then leading. But at the end of three weeks or thereabouts, the novel sensation of doing good began, imperceptibly at first, but more palpably by degrees, to lose somewhat of its pleasing lustre. His conscience—that slave, or tyrant, as we choose to make it—gradually left off patting him on the back for the visits he made three days in the week to the court, where lived the widow of the poor musician; and not only ceased to commend him in the performance of the dutiful routine he had virtually prescribed for himself, but actually gave him a twinge, because he was not still

more active, and positively frowned upon him if for a moment he dreamt of remission.

It is hard to work, to labour “neither for love nor money,” to toil on without receiving the “equivalent” in coin or thanks. To be sure, he had the thanks of more than one poor family in the wretched quarter he was in the habit of visiting, and hearty thanks these were; but then they were oftener in the heart than in the mouth, for such as felt them were not such, as had much power to express them. Pierce had not quite learnt this, and if he had, such thanks would not have been the “equivalent” he wanted.

Who, when relieving his pocket of some change in heavy coppers, and bestowing them on an importunate starveling, feels to deserve the blessing called down from Him whose blessings and curses are only for the motive? Nay, who, even, that goes across the way to purchase “oil and wine,” for the dying Lazarus, feels to deserve the beggar’s blessing? not the good Samaritan. Never will

the inward monitor say to the good man :
“Thou hast done well ; rejoice at thy own well-doing.” It will oftener say : “Thou hast done better this time than the last—but by whose aid ? Alas ! that thy good acts are so few and far between.” And still oftener will it say : “For what thou hast done, thank the Great Giver, who has made thee, unworthy as thou art, a steward of His merciful gifts !”

Consider, beneficent friend, whoe’er you are — why did you drop your copper into that blind old woman’s basket ? Did any one else the same before you ? And did you feel ashamed to be outdone in charity by another ? Why that halfpenny to the shirtless brat, or to the young mother who carries a diseased infant in her arms, and tenders for your purchase a bunch of infected flowers ? Did they pester you by running and begging at your side ? Why so generous a donation to this or that Benevolent Society ? Does it please your vanity

to set forth your name as governor, or visitor, or chairman? Doubtless, without your name the example, say you, would be lost? Why, to go further, didst thou give soup and bread to the emaciated wretch who sits always at thy gates, or get a hospital ticket for that poor thing whose horrible sores have eaten through its flesh, and left bare the bones, that are full of rottenness? Say, art thou by nature tender-hearted? And did these sights which daily greeted thee, excite commiseration, till thou couldst no longer bear the presence that so disturbed the “even tenor of your way?” Perhaps, thou hast a sin or two it would be as well to blot out, and hopest to make some acceptable immolation, “*pro remedio animæ tuæ.*” Perhaps thine eyes have this day glanced upon a warning passage, making thee feel more squeamish than is thy custom; and thou hast relieved thy stomach by casting up a mite from out the treasure whereof the warning impertinently told thee thou didst possess above thy share. Is it

so ? Confess truly ! And, of all the blessings wafted up to the throne of Mercy from the lips of want—say how many thou expectest reflected back upon motives like these !

In Pierce's charity there was something of penitence, something of novelty, something of soft-heartedness and natural sympathy, something of self-gratification, and something of duty and Love ; which last alone deserved the "equivalent" he yearned for.

If it had been possible, as certainly it was not at this early stage of his progress, for the last of these motives to have actuated him unalloyed by any baser ones, he would have persevered without need of more encouragement. But having only journeyed as far as the first "meadow," like Christian, he could not discern the light beyond the "wicket-gate ;" and with certain misgivings as to the path that lay beyond, he had to encounter the ordinary temptations which in

the moment of despondency suggest a turning back. He flinched a little, and as giving way to one temptation always creates a vacuum that is instantly filled by another, he found it inconvenient to visit the widow's court one day, and out of the question the next, because he had promised to call on Lady Pumpton.

CHAPTER V.

LADY PUMPTON'S small parties were almost the only parties he ever went to. Restricting himself to this moderate indulgence of society, he naturally enjoyed himself with greater zest when he did go out. In his secret heart, though he would not have admitted the idea, in his secret heart there was a sort of excitement in the society of Lady Pumpton. It was singularly seductive after the monastic life in his Whitehall lodgings. Lady Pumpton made much of him; she was fond of him; she did not hesitate to show her preference, even when

Pumpton was present. Pierce thought at first that she was playing a part to rouse her husband from his habitual apathy and growing indifference. But as her manner was the same whether Lord Pumpton was there or not, a suspicion crossed him that Arabella regretted a union with a man who was her inferior in every respect, and that she now entertained something akin to attachment for one whose advances she had never positively rejected, and about whom even up to the time of her engagement she had shown as much sentiment perhaps as it was in her nature to feel.

A suspicion that a woman, whatever she may be like, is in love with him is not otherwise than a very flattering unction for any man to lay to his soul. And in the event of a susceptible man suspecting that a pretty woman is in love with him, why obviously, &c. Pierce was a susceptible man; and Lady Pumpton was a pretty woman; or rather, not a pretty, but a beautiful woman.

There *is* a distinction, and a very wide one, as every person knows who makes use of one term in preference to the other. It may be sometimes doubtful which adjective is the more appropriate; but it is not an every-day occurrence that puzzles us to give a name to the happy blending of the two conditions, when neither predominates. To define the precise meaning of each, or either, is less easy than to appreciate them when seen. “Beauty,” says Dr. Johnson, “is that assemblage of graces or proportions of parts which pleases the eye.” This definition would suit prettiness almost as aptly: for what is pretty, also pleases the eye. But without an assemblage of graces, or proportion of parts, it is difficult to conceive what would please the eye; at least in the sense here used. Of course there are things which sometimes please the eye without possessing any combination of graces whatsoever—as, for example, a ham sandwich when a man is hungry, or a pot of porter when he is thirsty—neither of which can, in

accordance with the strict rules of etymology, be termed pretty or beautiful. When, therefore, we apply the epithet beautiful in contradistinction to pretty, we have probably in our minds some notion more definite than can be derived from the dictionary.

We regret to confess an incapability of explaining precisely what we mean by saying Lady Pump-ton was beautiful, and not pretty; though we should know at once when and where to use one word in preference to the other. We also know what the impression is which both qualities, when we meet with them separately, produce respectively upon us.

Associated with the idea of beautiful is an idea of grandeur, of an admiration in its awe-inspiring sense, which, whatever may be its other effects upon the mind, is far more likely to draw tears than laughter. We do not conceive the beautiful always to be an object of love: far from it. It may either be entirely beyond the reach of that affection, or else it may, with equal probability, inspire us with fear

or hatred. Beauty is not necessarily connected with goodness. As much beauty of form may be conceived in the face of an angel after as before his fall. Not one of us is always in the humour to admire the beautiful. Some there are who have no admiration for it at all.

Prettiness operates upon the mind quite otherwise. What is pretty has no natural tendency to make us cry, unless it capriciously puts its finger in our eye, or playfully tweaks our nose. It has nothing to do with the sublime—may even give its own nose a “celestial” turn at that high quality, and still sacrifice none of its own idiosyncrasy.

The “pretty” is diametrically opposed to the grand: in as much as it never impresses one as a characteristic, unless in intimate connection with the small. Indeed one of its received significations is that of a diminutive. Thus in the expressions “pretty well,” “pretty,” in a measure, moderates the

force of the second epithet, leaving "well" less well than if it stood alone.

But to let 'well alone' and return to our "beauty." No attempt at minute analysis can give so clear an idea of our notion of the two words perhaps, as a description of the ultimate effect, combined of all other effects, which they separately have upon the beholder. In the contemplation of beauty, a desire immediately possesses one to provide it with the very highest pedestal the imagination can furnish; and, having piously placed it on the top, to stand at the remotest visible distance, so that it may neither tumble down and crush us, nor by any other accident contrive to spoil the delusion to which distance lends so much enchantment.

To treat the "pretty" in a more summary way, it may be considered as a very rational impulse to smile affectionately on the substantive it adorns; and, if the said substantive admits of the adjective—permits,

we should say—to chuck it under the chin, and, with more or less ado, proceed to give it a kiss.

Having reached this climax, it has occurred to us that no less a genius than Mr. Burke has treated in a less familiar style and somewhat more at length of the very same subject, viz. the Pretty, without coming to a similar conclusion. Now this—still to digress from Lady Pumpton—compels us deferentially to state in self-defence that, however true the philosophical axiom, that “a thing cannot both be and not be,” it manifestly does not impair the truth that two persons may see the same things in different lights, and even see the same thing differently in the same light.

To wit, a lady may wear a dress by candle-light, which you are convinced is blue, and which, nevertheless, she will maintain to her dying day was purple. In point of fact people imagine they have similar ideas respecting similar objects, when, in reality, such an expression as “I am exactly of your

opinion," is, to use the mildest term of reprobation, a mere figure of speech.

But if it be true that no thing can at the same time occupy two separate places, may it not be equally true that no one idea can exist in more than one man's brain at a time? For the impression which is parent to the idea, cannot affect more than one impressible object in the same degree at the same moment; since no two impressible objects can, by any calculable combination of chances, in consequence of the infinite number of heterogeneous impressions to which they are otherwise exposed, be in a condition to be similarly impressed at the same moment. This, of course, is assuming the non-existence of original ideas; and as no original idea has hitherto been persuaded, under the most seductive influences, to step up and show itself, "like a man;" the assumption cannot well be considered as a presumption, and the proposition might with no great rashness be subscribed with a tolerably triumphant Q.E.D.

It cannot be asserted in illustration of this hypothesis that when people imagine they agree, their ideas are absolutely as distinct from each other as the idea of a poker is distinct from the idea of a pat of butter. It is simply contended that the idea is not at the same time identically the same in the minds of both. And though not the same, is still, according to the impressibility of the subject, more or less correct and appropriate in each case. From which it may be inferred, notwithstanding the variance in the two conclusions, that, practically, the sensation experienced by the philosopher when contemplating a real instead of an ideal subject might have coincided pretty nearly with what is here arrived at with so little periphrasis.

Lady Pumpton was beautiful. But one moment longer! We have omitted what should have been tacked on as an appropriate expletive to the above disquisition. Kindest, most patient of readers! When-

ever your naturally amiable disposition prompts you to scratch an author's eyes out for writing twenty pages in no way connected with his story, gently remember that his ultimate purpose may, hereafter, plead his forgiveness with you.

For the last time we repeat it. Lady Pump-ton was beautiful. She was above the average height of women, and would have been a trifle too tall but for the exquisite grace and symmetry of proportion which distinguished her figure in every crowd. Not the most elementary glimpse into phrenology was needed to call attention to the remarkable beauty of her head. The whitest and most affected of swans will but faintly express the way it was set on with its arrogant fulness of neck. Her hair was black, and she boasted, when loose, that it reached exactly to her feet. Her face—but it cannot be dissected and described anatomically—imagine the cream skimmed from the loveliest description of your favourite romance

heroine you can think of. Imagine pearls bedded in rose-leaves for teeth and lips ; purest snow reflecting faintly the crimson hues of glowing sunsets for complexion ; for eyes—spangling dew-drops as big as walnuts—no that won't do—crystallized globes of violets' blood—or rather—but imagine what pleases you best, and consign each lovely feature to its proper destiny—still you have not the faintest vision of Lady Pumpton's face ; and simply because the expression of a woman's eyes, the curl of a woman's lip, defies not description only, but, when she pleases, all the powers of the subtlest analysis.

In Lady Pumpton's face it was precisely the eye and mouth which made the mystery. When she spoke, she very rarely looked at you ; the heavy fringe of eyelash seemed to weigh down the lid ; now and then the veil was raised, but the deep blue orbs were as impenetrable as the azure vaults of heaven. Hardly ever did the expression of the eye accord with

that of the mouth ; a soft smile played around the lower features, while from those above, there flashed a momentary glance of contempt, or hatred, so malignant yet so very transitory, that you almost doubted whether your own senses had not deceived you. Her voice was low and soft ; she seldom said an ill-natured word, but brightened up when she heard one spoken. Her conversation implied malicious thoughts, but to a careless ear it was meaningless.

CHAPTER VI.

It was the evening of one of her small parties. There were no drawing-rooms in all London more magnificently furnished than Lady Pumpton's—none where refinement and taste more eminently portrayed the mind of the arranger. If the brocades were so handseme, or the ceilings so begilded, as might have called forth a sneer in the mansion of a wealthy *parvenue*—here the mind tranquilly reposed in the delicious confidence that nothing could be vulgar. What trouble and anxiety spared when we know beforehand that criticism is not expected, and

that a refinement is dispensable which otherwise would have to be got up for the occasion !

The rooms were only full : not crowded in the London sense, but about as full as the ball of St. Paul's would be with a dozen people in it—room, in short, to rub your own nose if it tickled, without the danger of performing that operation for somebody else, whose organ ‘*smelt* repose.’ Yet small as the party was, all “the world” was there—*i.e.*, all that portion of the metropolitan orb who bore to the rest of society about the same relation which the civilised bears to the uncivilised part of the globe.

Splashing about them, in the shallow waters of these “select few,” were one or two ministerial leviathans ; whose comings and goings were generally pretty manifest, from the commotion they created amongst the sprats and small fry who frequent all places of public resort both high and low, vulgar and select, in the shape of under-secretaries, clerks to ———, ———, ———, and

other public offices. Not that these young gentlemen would budge an inch when off duty, to accommodate the gouty toe of the first minister in the land—such is the high blood, not to say high breeding, which places them on a level with the highest—but they do entertain a sort of latent deference for the lucky being, who has planted a foot on the top round of a ladder they have just begun to climb. And whether that lucky being is in a condition to give them a lift, or whether—which is more likely—he is balancing himself in an unpleasant way upon one leg, measuring with a wry face the depth of his imminent fall, it matters not, so long as they can be seen shaking hands with him; and, by as familiar a recognition as they dare make, intimate to an admiring world, the vast amount of friendship and confidence respectively existing between them.

There, too, was one of the great humorists of the day always feeling in everybody's way,

and always endeavoring to get out of it ; humbly making place for a lackadaisical ensign in the Guards, and hopelessly trying to look lackadaisical himself to a beauty who patronized him, and for whose album he had done a caricature and a sonnet. Poor fellow ! he perspired at the thought of his insignificance in this splendid crowd ; but chuckled when he got into a corner to think what a potentate he was when *alone*.

There too was that distinguished individual, Mr. Evriboddey, whose amphibious youth as proser and poet was relapsing into a green winter of discontent. Having disappointed the world, he felt it incumbent upon him for consistency's sake to bore it. In this vocation he was really successful. And though his own ebullitions were pre-eminently ponderous, he at least reminded one of this truthful and very applicable couplet,—

“ Some have at first for Wits, then Poets past,
Turn'd Critics next, and prov'd plain fools at last.”

There also were the ubiquitous elder sons, and the drove of beauties brought to market for their inspection. A few nobodies were also there, whom Lady Pump-ton had condescendingly treated to a dazzle. Of our old acquaintances we may recognize the Fitzbuns, father and daughter, Lady Pipladem, whose party comes off to-morrow, and Mr. Arthur Longvale.

“ Ah ! Pierce, old fellow, why you’re a sight good for sore eyes ; but how deuced thin you look ! ” said Longvale.

“ What’s brought you up ? ” answered Pierce, returning the cordial shake of his friend’s hand. “ You wrote me that you would be out of town all winter.”

“ Oh ! I don’t know ; it’s a bad year for birds, and then one always comes to London when one has nothing else to do. Have you seen Eda or my uncle ? ”

“ No,” said Pierce, startled at the question. “ Are they here ? ”

“ Oh, no ! she doesn’t go out, you know.

It's not once in a hundred years they come to town. I don't know what my lord has brought her up for. Perhaps, *you* can guess though. Eh, old fellow?" and Mr. Longvale playfully planted the tip of his forefinger in the neighbourhood of his friend's waistcoat pocket.

"How should I know?" said Pierce, gravely. "Where is Lady Pumpton?"

"I have not seen her. I have only just come from the Coventry. How de do, Lady Charles?"

As Arthur turned, Pierce moved away to look for Lady Pumpton. He found her enthroned on an ottoman in the inner room. The Duchess of Phatanapy was sitting by her side, and Baron Ratamowsky, the great Polish traveller, was practising pantomime before her. Old Lord Goatsam was waiting with his simple smile and palsied head to take the Baron's place. But our friend "the porpoise" was close at hand ready for a leap; and Mr. Evriboddey had secretly resolved that, *coûte*

qui coûte, he would fill up the vacancy when there was one. A handsome youth, with a downy face, whom nobody observed but Pierce, was hovering in the background, plainly revealing by the timid looks he stole towards the ottoman, what dreadful havoc the fair enchantress had made with his heart.

Lady Pumpton smiled an occasional "Really!" and a "How *very* funny!" and all the time 'looked a thousand *yawns*, but used none.'

"Alzo Lord Bumbton av not come yet from ze ouse," said the Baron, endeavouring to create a fresh interest by starting a *new* subject. "Je m'étonne qu'il préfère to geep away better as to stop a dome. Mais," and here he delivered himself of a killing look, and a shrug expressive of the most profound pity, "chacun à son goût. Vor my bart—"

"He is fond of Parliament," interposed Lady Pumpton; sparing herself with great self-denial the pleasing culmination his gallantry was palpably drawing to.

“My Got!” exclaimed the Baron, “est-il possible? and Bumbton too such liar—paresseux—what you call him?”

“Idler, I suppose you mean,” said her ladyship, for the first time provoked to a genuine smile.

“Yes, yes, idler. Alzo—”

“Ah! Lady Pumpton,” said Mr. Evriboddey, sidling his way to the front, and by the same evolution pushing Ratamowsky to the rear, “I have hardly strength left to say ‘how d’ye do?’ I have actually done a ministerial dinner, three drums and a ball, in order to get here early.”

Lady Pumpton tried to smile, but only sighed.

“Now do say I deserve the paradise I have reached, after patiently undergoing all this purgatory.”

Lady Pumpton perhaps might have said that Mr. Evriboddey did deserve it, but happily Sir Andrew had not patience to wait for the answer.

“Well, my lady,” and Evriboddey was lost in the amplitude of Fitzbun’s coat-tails, “how are we to-night? I have been waiting to pay my homage to your ladyship for some time. C’est l’amour, l’amour qui fait le monde revolver.”

“Yes,” thought Pierce, who had got as far as the Duchess of Phatanapy, “and c’est l’amour that will presently make you revolve out of that, old boy.” So thinking, he slightly raised his voice in talking to the Duchess. It had the desired effect. Lady Pump-ton heard; and turning with more vivacity than her manner had betrayed all the evening, held out a hand, which Pierce condescended to press slightly in acknowledgment of the extreme beauty of its owner.

“Why so late?” inquired her ladyship, in a chiding tone of voice, gently raising as she spoke the fringed veils from the mysterious orbs beneath them.

“I couldn’t find you.”

Pierce was thinking of Lady Eda ; and did not feel amiable.

“ Perhaps you didn’t look,” said Lady Pumpton ; but so lowly he could barely hear her.

Pierce moved as if to make way for old Lord Goatsam.

“ Don’t go,” said Lady Pumpton ; “ these people bore me so ! Here’s plenty of room, if you like to sit down.”

This was said loud enough for the Duchess to hear. Lady Pumpton knew that Pierce was a pet of the Duchess.

“ Lots of room,” said the stout old lady, pulling her petticoats out of the way. “ Come along ; we’ll have him between us. Ke, ke, ke !”

The two ladies made a space ; and Pierce, who felt melancholy and victimized, seated himself with the feelings of a martyr between them.

Lady Pumpton, apprehending the capri-

cious humour of her favourite, discreetly left him in the undivided possession of the garrulous Duchess, foreseeing that in a very few minutes any change would to him be for the better.

"You never come near me now," began the Duchess. "What have you been doing with yourself?"

"My dear Duchess," replied Mr. More, in a most deprecatory manner, "you know I never go anywhere: not of course that that is any reason why I shouldn't come and see you; but the truth is, I am sick and sorry, and weary of the world."

"How the child talks, ke, ke!" which 'ke, ke,' by the way, was a sort of wheezy laugh peculiar to her Grace. "And why don't you come and tell me all about it? Tell me now, do I know her?"

"No," said Pierce, laughing, "I don't think you do; and if you did, it wouldn't be of any use."

"I don't know that, my dear," said the

good-natured old woman. "Is she here? Come, I will ask her to dinner to-morrow, and you shall have it all your own way."

"I am afraid we can't manage it," said Pierce. "You know you always promised to get me a nice wife, and you see you have not succeeded yet, Duchess."

"Ke, ke, ke," and her grace threw her head back to ke, ke, to her heart's content.

"Well, well," she said, "we shall manage it some day; but you must come and see me—will you, now? I have got a new tom-tit; and he stands on his head much better than the last one did. He is such a love! He won't let Parker come near him! it's rather provoking, because Parker is the third groom of the chambers I have been obliged to send away—I was so afraid they had been cruel to him. You must come and see him—will you, now?"

"Yes, I'll promise to come; but when shall I find you at home? I called once or twice, and they told me you were out, which

I am quite certain was not the case ; unless you desired them not to let me in."

"How very tiresome—now, how very stupid ! I particularly desired them always to say 'at home' when you called. But come early in the morning, very early, about twelve, you know, and" (here her grace did her best to look fascinating) "we will walk together in Kensington Gardens."

"Are you in earnest, Duchess ?"

"Yes, certainly. It's not more than half-an-hour's drive, and it would be so charming !"

"Delightful !" said Pierce, refreshed with the novelty of the idea, and anxious to encourage her grace's sentiment. "Charming indeed, and so romantic !"

"Ah !" said her grace, with a sigh that came from about the region where the small of her back ought to have been, "I often wish I was plain Mrs. Phatanapy, with a neat little cottage by the sea-side, instead of being obliged to go through all this sort of thing."

“What, Mister Pierce!” said Sir Andrew, who with Evriboddey had been growling and snarling for the fair object of contention before them. “I hardly observed you before. How have you been since Mona? Have ye seen Lady Eda? They’re in town, I hear.”

At the mention of Lady Eda’s name, Lady Pumpton looked full at Pierce. But he replied to Sir Andrew’s question with perfect self-possession.

“Of course,” said Pierce, “*you* have been to pay your respects to Lady Eda.”

“No, young gentleman, I have not.”

“I should have thought,” said Pierce, “that such a very *old* friend of the family as you are, with the sort of *paternal* regard I know you feel for Lady Eda, would have called there the instant they came up.”

“See,” said Lady Pumpton, addressing herself to More, “there’s your friend, Miss Halcyon; why don’t you go and speak to her?”

"I have bowed to her once already to-night, and she hardly deigned to acknowledge me. It will make her vain, if I allow her to treat me in that way twice in one evening."

"Poor thing," said Lady Pumpton, "she is so short-sighted."

Miss Halcyon was totally blind of one eye. Lady Pumpton found it more amiable to intimate this fact indirectly.

"Yes," said Pierce, drily, and watching for the effect of what he was going to say. He knew Lady Pumpton hated Miss Halcyon; for before Arabella's marriage, they had been rivals; that is to say, neither of them ever missed a ball; and Miss Halcyon, notwithstanding the blemish to her beauty, had still one remarkably fine eye "left to do its worst in witchery." So that, with this and a handsome figure, combined with the *désir charmant de plaire*, and more than a usual quantum of the *coquetterie permise*, she was at least second to none but Lady Pumpton; and managed to share pretty

evenly with her more beautiful but less conciliating rival, that monopoly of partners which naturally it is the height of all young ladies' ambition to see following in their train, to the consternation and despair of every other young lady in the room.

"Yes," said Pierce, drily, "she is *rather* short-sighted, not to say a little blind ; but I suppose the real reason she does not look at me is, that she is afraid of giving me a coup de *seul œil*."

"That's very considerate of her, isn't it?" said her ladyship, with an affectionate look at Pierce.

Pierce was on the point of backing up this extremely ill-natured sarcasm by a very pretty speech to herself—when his intention was suddenly changed by seeing her husband standing close at hand watching them, and evidently listening to their conversation.

There was an unpleasant look of suspicion in his lordship's face ; which, when he came to think of it, Pierce had observed once or

twice before, under very similar circumstances.

“How are you, Pumpton?” said Pierce, rising, and lazily stretching out two fingers for the affectionate embrace of the noble lord. Then turning again to her ladyship, without further notice of her husband, he said, “Well, good night, Lady Pumpton, I must go and make my bow to Lady Shurtisland. They say she is not satisfied with having married one daughter to the Grand Duke of Parmazan, but that she has a design upon old Lummy Lummy, King of the Hoity Toity Islands, who is over here on a visit, and is to be exhibited at her ladyship’s to-night.”

“So I hear; good night! But spot a minute,” and Lady Pumpton held him back by the hand that still remained in hers, “are you going to Lady Pippledem’s to-morrow?”

“Yes,” said Pierce, “I think I shall look in for half-an-hour. I suppose it will be over by twelve o’clock, as it is Saturday night.

I hope you observed how she puts ‘small and early’ in one corner of her card. Why do these sort of people always commit atrocities of this kind? ‘Small and early’ reminds one of young peas, or some incongruous idea of the kind. Good night! Night, Pumpton!” and Pierce nodded as he passed the husband. Pausing on his way out to make passing salutes to some half-score of acquaintances on the staircase, he brushed impatiently by the linkmen and departing crowd at the street-door, and walked at a round pace towards his lodgings in Whitehall.

CHAPTER VII.

HE had plenty of time for reflection on his way home, and plenty of time for reflection after he reached home. But the more he reflected, the less reason had he to be pleased with his own thoughts.

He had of late been carelessly floating back into that treacherous vortex, from which the accident of his disappointed love had so rudely plucked him. After the first poignancy of the anguish succeeding to this catastrophe was over, he had for some weeks enjoyed the consolation ever to be derived from a well-ordered occupation, having for its aim other

motives than self-indulgence. The good sense which in truth was strongly seated in his character, answered the call which necessity had made upon it. Mr. Gregory's advice, and the manifest futility of persisting in a hopeless attachment, had roused in him powers he knew himself to be possessed of; and, applying the balm of self-esteem to the wounds inflicted upon his self-love, he had set himself to that course of self-examination, which, as we have already seen, eventuated in the discovery of the surest path to happiness and contentment.

With the exception of a melancholy remembrance of Lady Eda—and happiness is never unalloyed—there was no period of his life upon which he could look back with greater satisfaction, than upon that small portion of it spent in resignation, hope, self-improvement, and charitable action.

In his earnest resolve to think no more of her, he was fast forgetting the lesson which

the loss of her had taught him. As spiritual consolation was needed less—the door opened wider to worldly allurements. He began by tasting the poisoned honey of temptation ; soon the tender wings of a newly-fledged virtue, which had enabled him to soar above it, were clogged with sweetness, till, shortly he was threatened with a struggle that went hard to avail him.

Again the image of Lady Eda was unexpectedly raised before him. “She was here : transported from her own land of purity to the same infected city with himself. Still from him, at least, she was as remote as ever. No ! there was a mystic influence in her proximity. Vain the effort to dispel this power amid the babblings of a heartless throng—vain trial to forget the loveliness of simple modesty in the syren glances of selfish passion—vain to force oblivion by strains of hollow mirth, or shameless malice with flattered vanity and pretended callousness. Should he plunge at once into the

fiery pool of sin and hot excitement, nor longer hesitate in childish fear or feeble doubt? He had tried the jejune fruits of virtue; they were sickly and insipid. Besides, was he the happier now for all his steadiness? No. Then what to him was Lady Eda? The beautiful wife of Lord Pumpton loved him. Beautiful! how beautiful! and then another's wife! The delicious sinfulness of such a love! Should he be true to a woman who cared nothing for him, who knew not even of his constancy? Should he smile coldly on one who perhaps adored him?" He hesitated: a thought of the widow's court crossed his mind. How loathsome was the thought! He sickened at the prospect of plodding on through dull monotony, unsympathized with, all the finer elements of his nature pining and wasting from disuse—while one who was beautiful, full of soul and passion as himself, loved him. His pulse beat high; his brain throbbed; the fierce excitement of

evil, already done in thought, wrought fearfully within him ; then ensued a desperate effort of his higher, better nature, to resist the demon which threatened to chain it down. Still he might withhold. As yet 'twas but in thought. He seized his writing-case, unlocked it with haste, as if afraid to let the impulse pass, and turned it upside down ; letters and papers fell upon the floor. He threw himself upon his knees to pick out the one he sought for. It was a mere empty envelope, but on the fair side of it were the outlines of a face. He had caught one of Lady Eda's happiest expressions, and rough as was the sketch, it was full of grace and life. He looked at it intently. It was the first time he had seen it since the day it was done ; and, more vividly than the news of her arrival, did this little sketch recall the form and character of her whom he had—whom he still loved. He was going to kiss it, but he stopped himself.

“ Pshaw !” he exclaimed : but it was all he

could say ; for a strange feeling of joy almost choked him. He smiled in gladness, but his eyes were red and swimming, and when he squeezed the lids together, a couple of tear-drops trickled down. “Pshaw! don’t be a fool! Not this time, Eda. There! back again to your hiding-place amongst the rubbish. Thank God! you have saved me, and the struggle is over. And now, my Lady Arabella, the sooner you make up your mind to fall in love with your husband, the better I shall like you.” Thus saying, he closed his eyes, and thanked Heaven for the gift of renewed strength.

Perfectly sincere are the contritions of such hearts as these. The most exposed to temptation, they are carried beyond themselves by headlong impulse ; and, having erred, as bitterly repent as heedlessly they sinned. That night Pierce felt happy and secure in the victory of his moral nature. And, as almost always happens, the very next day his inclination to yield was so strong, that he had

more reason than ever to mistrust his fortitude, and the infallibility he had just confided in.

Scoff not at the sudden outburst of enthusiastic piety, ye cold-blooded unerring mortals, whose passionless existence is proof to all temptation! Have ye never deeply sinned? Then have ye never felt the holy ecstasy of God's love poured into your broken and contrite heart! Spare your pity, ye 'ninety-nine just men who need no repentance.' The one poor sinner who repenteth hath found more favour in the sight of God than all of you. Do ye know less pains? Yes—fewer pleasures too! Think ye that man, the highest in gradation of God's created beings, is not at times more darkened in his existence than the bloodless reptile of the lowest grade? The crawling toad feels no pang of conscience. Do ye envy it? Rest assured that in the close chain your link is nearer to the reptile's than to God's "own image." If ye find the collar easy and are amazed

at them that sigh, suspect at least they lay their shoulders to as lustily as ye do. It is very hard to be good ; and in the beginning of the trial some enthusiasm is not amiss. Calm piety, more assured self-control may come at last ; but look for them in old age as the price of your youth's labour.

We are sorry that Pierce's resolution of the night did not carry him quite scathless through the rest of his life, and more sorry that it only lasted in full force till the next temptation beset him. We are sorry ; we do not despair. For if he *almost* gave in after such a resolution, it is reasonable to suppose he would not have resisted a moment had he made no struggle at all.

Directly after breakfast next morning he was at the widow's court, going his rounds more cheerfully than he had done for some time past. He felt so humble and good, and began to have visions of Timbuctoo ; and wondered how they would receive him if he got into a Hansom cab, there and then,

and offered himself gratis to the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts. When he returned to his lodgings, he was quite elated with himself for the exemplary turn his conduct had taken, and was actually about to ring the bell for Johnny, with a view to giving that young gentleman his first lesson in the Church Catechism—when his eye chanced to light upon a three-cornered note folded, directed, and lying on the table, with the most insinuating and interesting aspect that ever three-cornered note was known to present. We need hardly say it was from Lady Pumpton ; as it is very short we will transcribe it.

“I dine alone at eight, and shall expect you. You need not answer this ; I shall take it for granted you come, because I want particularly to see you before you go to Lady Pippledem’s.

“ Yours,

“ ARABELLA P.”

“Now confound the woman!” ejaculated Pierce, throwing the note in the fire. “What, in the name of wickedness, does she want? Some tom-foolery, I’ll be bound for it! Let’s see how she signs herself.” Here he snatched the half-consumed letter from the burning coals, at the imminent peril of his fingers, and blew away the flame while he read aloud “Yours, Arabella P.” The note fell into the grate, and he bit his lips. “Oh, bother it! I’ll write and say I am engaged, that’s all! But, dash it! I am not engaged; that would be telling a lie. I’ll write, and say I can’t go; but that won’t be civil! After all, I may as well go. I’ll talk seriously to her the whole time. Then, hang it! if she gives one of her looks it will be all up with me. I know what I’ll do! I’ll go and call, and let her say what she has got to say; I can make some excuse about dinner, and come away when I find it getting dangerous.”

Concluding this sophistical train of reasoning by an ingenious compromise, he put off

Johnny's lesson and went straightway to call on Lady Pumpton.

He found her at home. She was lying perdue on the sofa, more lovely than ever in her morning dishabille. As he entered, she changed her recumbent to a sitting posture; and blushing slightly, muttered something about an early visit.

"I have come," he said, trying to look formal and indifferent, "merely to decline the honour of dining with you to-night."

"Really! and why are you obliged to decline that *honour*?"

"Because I am obliged."

"An excellent reason indeed! and one, I suppose, you mean me to be satisfied with?"

"If you will be so amiable for once," said Pierce, smiling.

"For once then I will, because I must."

"Nay, but compulsory amiability is worth nothing."

"What a tyrant you are!" said Arabella, looking the while the picture of a beautiful slave.

“Tell me,” she continued, changing her manner suddenly, “what made you out of sorts last night?”

“Nothing that I am aware of.”

“Yes, something. You are altered lately; what is it?”

“Nothing, I tell you; can’t you believe me?”

Lady Pumpton did not seem to hear him.

“Are you annoyed at anything—with anybody—with me?—have *I* offended you?”

“Lady Pumpton! are you jesting? How could I be offended with you? I should not dare—”

“To tell me so to my face?”

Pierce was anxious to change the subject.

“I want to know, Lady Pumpton, what you had particularly to say to me.”

“I don’t think I will tell you, since you refused to let me know the reason you can’t dine here.”

“Oh yes! do say.”

“Perhaps it has something to do with your declining the *honour*, &c.”

"I cannot conceive."

"Have you no suspicions?"

"None."

"About some one person who interests you very much—whom you are very fond of, for instance?"

Pierce blushed and said a guilty "No."

"Is there no such person, Mr. More?"

"I could not say, indeed."

"Well, then, I'll tell you. There is a report that you are to be married to Lady Eda Longvale."

"It is false. Who told you?"

"Oh! it is a current report in the mouth of all the world."

"Then tell the world, with my compliments, it lies!"

"You seem indignant at the supposition, as if such an event would be distasteful to you. Do you not like Lady Eda? They say she is so charming."

"I believe," answered Pierce, "some people think her so; my acquaintance with

Lady Eda Longvale is unfortunately a very short one."

"One has heard of love at first sight, Mr. More: the length of an acquaintance does not *always* determine the nature of it, I am sure."

"Perhaps not; but the quickest to fall in love are often the quickest to fall out of it."

"And for that reason you keep your own heart in ice, I suppose?"

"To be sure; and it is the wisest plan, I think, for everybody."

Lady Pumpton sighed inaudibly.

"Then you do not admire Lady Eda Longvale?"

"I never said so."

"Oh! then you do admire her?"

"I never said that either."

"You imply it, at all events, and the world is right in its conjecture after all?"

"I repeat you may tell the world it lies."
Then assuming an air of levity, he pursued:
"And what is more, you may tell the next

person who says this, that you have direct authority from me to contradict the report. It may be very charming to be married in this off-hand way, but I assure you there is not the smallest chance of my changing my present blessed state of singleness; on the contrary, there is every chance of its becoming a still more single state, for I have been thinking seriously of leaving London altogether, and retiring to some secluded hermitage. You do not know of one you can recommend, do you?"

Poor Lady Pump-ton! she might well be provoked at such perversity. She, to whom so many would have gone on their knees for a mere smile, could not with all her beauty and fascination move this seeming heart of stone. So at least she fancied, never guessing how much indifference it was indispensable for Pierce to act, in order that he might feel a little.

On the table beside her was a small work-box. From out the small work-box she took a very tiny pair of scissors with

very sharp points. She twisted the tiny scissors about with her delicate fingers, and looked at Pierce. She did not say anything, but she thought as she twisted the scissors and then glanced at Pierce's glistening eyes, what a curious operation it would be to bore little holes with the points of the tiny scissors into the glistening eyes one after the other, and so let out the aqueous and crystalline humours. She thought too how all the intelligence of his face dwelt in those eyes, and how hideous he would look with two empty hollow sockets in the place of them. From this she got to wonder whether in his hideousness she should like him as much as now. She concluded that she should *love* him more. Why so? Because no one else would love him then, and she could sacrifice herself, honour, soul, everything to that love!

Arabella Pumpton was a bold and fearless woman: or she could not have thought

thus without shuddering. But she was calm—calm and beautiful—she was calmer even than Pierce. What could have saved them could they have seen each other's hearts then? Of what avail the man's slight grasp of virtue? The woman's pride—of what avail? The woman's pride! A mighty power too—unlike the feeble barrier which restrained the other—so mighty, that sooner than betray by look or gesture the secret of her heart, she would herself have torn out that heart, or submitted to the torture she had been thinking of for him!

“At present,” Lady Pumpton replied, as if after an endeavour to remember a peaceful and secluded hermitage, “no such spot occurs to me.”

Lord Pumpton entered. He returned Pierce's salute with a look of severe displeasure; and what is more, took very little trouble to conceal it. He then turned his back to the chimney, tucked one coat-tail under each arm, and stretched his legs as

far apart as they would conveniently go. This he seemed to be doing with the benevolent intention of saving Mr. More's complexion from too great exposure to the fire, for he stood straight before him. His lordship next took a survey of his beauteous spouse; beginning with her head, carrying his eyes to the extreme end of those little slippers encasing her pretty little feet, and so back again. This completed, he asked his beautiful spouse "if she was in the habit of receiving strangers in her dressing-gown?" To which facetious interrogation her ladyship vouchsafed no other reply than a contemptuous repetition of the words, "Dressing-gown!" accompanying them at the same time with a sweet smile of the most courteous pity for that benighted being, who, in the blindness of his ignorance, could mistake what she then wore for "a dressing-gown!"

Lord Pumpton shrugged his shoulders, hitched up his trowsers, and tossed his

head quickly up and down for several successive minutes, as if to ascertain whether or no the cervical vertebræ had been at all stiffened in consequence of the answer. When satisfied that they still retained their usual pliability, he left off nodding; and with a "hem!" that would have startled any person of weak nerves, placed himself behind his lady wife, and commenced with a well-pleased air to stroke her ladyship's hair. His hands were not by any means good specimens as 'members of an aristocratic body,' although they might in vulgar parlance have been designated as "nobby" hands, for the joints protruded in unsymmetrical curves, and the fingers themselves were twisted and crooked into all sorts of rival deformities. In addition to these slight defects, they were naturally of an unctuous and "puggy" temperament; so that in process of the stroking performance, a very limited imagination might have conceived a probable transfer of un-

pleasantly moist particles from the hands of the stroker to the hair of the stroked. Such a contingency apparently suggested itself to Lady Pump-ton ; for notwithstanding the dutiful submission with which she received this token of her lord's affection, Pierce observed that both her fingers and teeth were tightly clenched ; and a sort of slight shudder crept over her frame each time the hands met on the crown of her head preparatory to a fresh descent. Lord Pump-ton's features, usually free from any expression whatever, at first assumed a taunting sneer : by degrees this gave place to one of coarse brutality. Pierce picked up his hat : and in pure charity to Lady Pump-ton offered his hand to her husband ; hoping the interruption might cause him to desist. It produced the hoped-for result : and he took leave of them both, with the thanks of at least one.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE memory of Pumpton's filthy hands plastering down the luxuriant tresses of his lovely wife, clung to him all the afternoon. In the evening, when dressing for Lady Pippledem's party, Mrs. Daniels put a letter into his hands, observing to him as she did so, that "It was no doubt a furren letter, as it was writ on silver paper." Hastily concluding his toilet, he threw himself into his arm-chair, and read as follows:

"I prepared you for my departure from this country; which took place as I had anticipated. Our voyage was an easy one.

A few hours' steaming brought us safely to H——. I was now in the same continent with the object of my pursuit. On the same continent! Good Heavens! what a range of countries might I traverse before I overtook him! How, and whence was I to obtain my first clue to the direction he had taken? I knew thus much for certain, that the port I myself had reached, was the only one he could have landed at.

“ Having performed the voyage across the channel in a steamer belonging to the same company as that which had conveyed him, my first care on landing, was to inform myself of all the outlets to this city, by which a traveller could leave it. In addition to the two lines of railroad to A—— and L——, were three morning, and two evening diligences to N——, and for the south. Besides the steamers plying between this port and the coast of England, vessels in communication with T—— left twice a week. One of these boats had sailed on the same day as, and soon

after the arrival of the last English steamer. Now the question was, knowing as he must have known—that I was pursuing him, would he try to evade me by striking inland? Or would he make for a sea-port, whence he might effectually escape me by embarking in any vessel that at the moment of his chance arrival should be sailing for America? America, I felt convinced, would be his ultimate destination; as in that vast country alone could he hope to enjoy the fruits of his robbery without the fear of discovery or apprehension.

“I was already on my way to the packet bureau, hopelessly conning over the description most likely to detect him amongst the passengers who had booked for A——, when it occurred to me that the baggage-porters who attend the arrival of every steamer at the quay, would, from the close observation with which their calling leads them to mark the appearance of every traveller, have noticed Winter sufficiently to recall his figure by the

accurate delineation I was prepared to give of him. At first my inquiries received no satisfactory replies. At last, 'Come,' said I, 'here are twenty sous for any man amongst you, who can recollect the person I am in search of.'

" 'Par Dieu !' said one, 'I know him well, he is marked with the small-pox, but surely, he is not so tall as Monsieur says ; enfin, he is a short, stout man, about my size.'

" 'My friend,' said I, 'if you have seen him, there could be no mistake about it. He is, as I tell you, tall, slight in figure, with a sharp, straight nose, light beard and moustache ; he wears a braided surtout, and a broad German hat. If you have not seen such a man, in God's name say so.'

"The porters shrugged their shoulders, and I was already in despair, when another man joined us, who had hitherto been absent. A few words of explanation passed between him and his comrades.

" 'C'est moi, Monsieur, qui le connais,'

exclaimed the new-comer. ‘He was the first man out of the ship, and was, as it appeared, in a great hurry. He asked me when the first train left for ——. I told him the hour; and he gave me thirty sous (may Heaven reward his stinginess) for taking his baggage with all speed to the station.’

“‘Here’s for your information,’ said I. ‘When does the next train leave for the same place?’

“He looked at a town clock. ‘In ten minutes.’

“‘Then take my portmanteau there, and I will double the fee.’

“I knew, even if I succeeded in tracing Winter as far as ——, that I should there run great risk of losing sight of him, as he would infallibly have changed his disguise at the first convenient halting-place he arrived at. It was true he had only six-and-thirty hours start of me, but six-and-thirty hours would nearly suffice to put the whole of Europe between us. Still, however, I was

borne on by an unaccountable presentiment that I should finally overtake him.

“At —— I proceeded on the same system of inquiry as I had previously adopted on landing: and with like success I traced his steps to a small inn which, both from its locality, and the general demeanour of its inmates, struck me as a resort for the lowest class of travellers. I was at first unable to account for this apparent caprice on the part of a man whom I was so well aware had the means to purchase accommodation where he pleased; especially as I did not see how such an act facilitated his flight. A little reflection apprized me that in such quarters the suspicions which elsewhere might be roused by the total change in the appearance of a lodger, would, if excited at all, occasion but momentary concern; also amongst the servants of such an establishment, some venial scoundrel might be found whose service Winter could avail himself of, in case a pursuer should follow too closely upon

his heels. Prepared, then, to meet with some obstacle devised by Winter's craftiness, I cautioned the porter, whose instructions had directed me to the inn, to say nothing of the purpose that had brought me there; and took possession of my apartments with as much care for their comfortable arrangement as if it had been my intention to remain some days.

“Assuming the character of an Englishman travelling for amusement I soon succeeded in gathering about me a troop consisting of all the idlers in the place. By this means I was enabled to pick out the man most likely to have been employed by Winter; and, if there was such a man, to throw him off his guard by the vagueness of my questions and remarks. I was not long settling in my own mind which of the many adventurers—who mobbed me as they mob every foreigner in small hotels on the Continent—was by his cunning face, shabby dress, and plausible officiousness, the sort of

knave to have obtruded himself upon a person in search of an instrument of the kind. Drawing him aside I promised to engage him as a guide so long as I remained in ——; and expressed a wish to be conducted at once to the most remarkable buildings in the town. I carelessly asked him on the way whether many English had lately visited ——. He answered me with a quick and searching glance:

“ ‘There had been several.’

“ ‘Families or single travellers,’ I inquired.

“ ‘Both,’ he replied, politely.

“ ‘How long is it,’ I asked, ‘since any English people have been staying at the hotel where I now am?’

“ ‘There has not been a family there for some time,’ he returned.

“ ‘But single gentlemen?’ said I.

“ ‘Oh, there were always single gentlemen going and coming. He believed there was one or two in the hotel now.’

“ ‘If this was the man I suspected him to

be, he clearly had no intention of imparting his knowledge gratis.

“ ‘Do you get pretty regularly employed,’ said I, ‘in this way?’

“ ‘Mon Dieu !’ said he, ‘fortune is capricious.’

“ ‘You do, I suppose, all kinds of odd jobs, not neglecting chances when they are thrown in your way ; and are not over particular, I dare say, as to what the chance may be.’

“ ‘Beggars are not choosers,’ he replied. ‘Poverty makes it meritorious to do, what in easy circumstances might be a nicer point of honour.’

“ ‘You are a philosopher,’ I observed.

“ ‘Monsieur is graciously pleased to flatter me.’

“ ‘Not at all ; you are a shrewd fellow, I see. Here is something to bring you luck. Now tell me without more ado, where is the Englishman gone who was here yesterday ?’

“He looked at the money I had placed in his hand, and hesitated.

“‘I’ll give you five times as much,’ I exclaimed, ‘if you tell me the truth.’

“‘If Monsieur has the clairvoyance to see that his friend employed me, Monsieur should also know his friend’s movements better than I do.’

“I saw it would have been bad policy to lose my patience, and convinced that I had luckily hit upon the right man I made an additional advance of two or three more francs.

“‘Come,’ said I, ‘your information is valuable now, but if you keep it much longer it won’t be worth a sous.’

“This argument seemed to have some cogency. His features relaxed into a cunning smile.

“‘Monsieur is without doubt very anxious to overtake his friend?’

“‘I am.’

“‘And the friend of Monsieur it appeared

was equally anxious to avoid Monsieur. At least,' he added, artfully, 'he paid liberally to have his friend misguided.'

" 'He paid you?'

" 'He did, and promised more, if I misled you; for Monsieur is, I see, the person I was told to expect.'

" 'Now look you,' said I, emphatically; 'let us understand one another; you are trying to drive a hard bargain; I will pay you liberally—more liberally than you deserve—if you succeed in enabling me to catch the rogue I am in quest of. But until I do catch him I pay you nothing.'

" 'But when shall we meet again? *Par hazard* I might lose my wages.'

" 'As a security for both sides you shall go with me.'

" He listened attentively to my proposal, and for a second or two remained in consideration of it. Presently I saw an expression of deep villainy overspread his countenance, and he answered briefly:

“ ‘Let us go !’

“ ‘I suppose,’ said I, ‘he left yesterday morning, or sooner.’

“ ‘No,’ replied the guide, ‘he did not get away from this more than three hours before your arrival.’

“ ‘Good Heavens !’ I cried, ‘was I so close upon him, and you have suffered me to waste all this time when I might now have come up with him ?’

“ ‘Calm yourself,’ said my guide, chuckling, ‘you shall see him to-night.’

“ ‘To-night ! is it possible ? How, and what detained him here ?’

“ ‘His passport. There is a flaw in it somehow, and it may detain him again, but before it does, Monsieur will see him.’

“ ‘Bravo !’ I cried, in ecstasies ; ‘bring me to a sight of him, and your fortune is made.’

“ ‘Never fear,’ returned he, with a grin. ‘I thought I might be of service to Monsieur when he came.’

“ I did not forget this man’s willingness to serve two masters : the character I had to deal with was familiar to me. My former distress had brought me, alas ! too often in contact with such men. I recognize them at once, wherever it is my misfortune to fall in with them. It was this power of detection that led me to single him from the herd in the first instance.

“ ‘ And by what means,’ I inquired, ‘ do you propose to overtake him to-night ?’

“ It struck me that Winter was too sharp to have admitted this fellow so far into his confidence, as to acquaint him with the direction he intended to take.

“ ‘ Are you sufficiently aware of his plans to be sure that you will not be leading me a wild-goose chase ? Mind, if you deceive me,’ I added, ‘ I am not a man to be trifled with.’

“ My threat seemed not to move him in the least.

“ ‘ If Monsieur mistrusts me, he is not

obliged to engage me. The bargain is a fair one ; If I do not perform my *rôle*, Monsieur pays nothing.'

" ' But,' I exclaimed, impatiently, ' I lose my man.'

" ' Which,' rejoined the guide, ' you would equally do without my aid. But, I will tell you how we may overtake him. I do not know what place he is making for ; and the passport bureau would help us very little. But I do know that he left this in the A—— diligence ; and intends in all probability to take the rail where the diligence meets it at Q——. Now a train leaving this in half an hour's time reaches the grand junction at Q—— about an hour after the diligence arrives ; and the diligence passengers for A—— have to wait for the arrival of this train.'

" ' Then,' said I, ' he would in that case have reached A—— quite as soon if he had gone by the train which leaves this in half an hour. What made him take the diligence ?'

“ ‘Clearly,’ answered the guide, ‘that he might not have to stay here till you came. And, besides, he does not know that the diligence passengers for A—— have to wait for the arrival of our train. The diligence people lied to him as they lie to everybody: their *affiche* announces their arrival at Q—— in time for an earlier train.’

“ ‘In what way then did he hope to deceive me by means of your assistance?’

“ ‘Why,’ said the guide, laughing, ‘he took a place in the diligence leaving for R—— at the same time as he left for Q——. The place was booked in the name of Winter (his real name, I suppose), and I was to have taken you if necessary to show you this name at the booking-office.’

“ ‘But,’ said I, suspiciously, ‘I should have found out at the office that the passenger who took the place had forfeited it by not going.’

“ ‘Monsieur Winter,’ resumed the guide, ‘is an accomplished gentleman; he had

provided against this contingency by giving up his place to another man who also happened to be going that way : and, as I was commissioned to take the place, the people of the diligence would not have known Monsieur Winter from the other man.'

" ' Did Winter give you the money to take the place ?'

" ' Assuredly ; for without the money the place could not have been taken.'

" ' And if the truth was known,' said I, ' the place was not taken after all, for you pocketed the money. Is it not so ?'

" ' Ah, didn't I say Monsieur was a clair-voyant ?'

" The rascal seemed rather complimented by the estimation in which I held him.

" At the appointed hour we took leave of ——. I kept my guide in the same carriage with myself ; having so little confidence in his fidelity, that I was prepared to be betrayed at any minute. It was near midnight when we reached Q——. I lost not a moment in

securing my portmanteau ; and taking François, my guide, by the arm, I examined the face of every person I met with. The enormous station at Q—— was densely crowded ; trains and diligences from all parts had brought passengers to this great junction to join the main train going on to A——. We were much past our time ; and the bustle of passengers securing their seats, and porters hurrying about with the baggage, caused such a confusion, that I entertained but light hopes of discovering the face I sought for. Already the horn of the guard had sounded for the third and last time. François had been jostled from my hold ; I thought he was by my side, but on looking round he was no more to be seen. I ran hastily from one end of the platform to the other. The station was badly lighted, and the crowd still as dense as ever. The train began to move. ‘ François !’ I shouted, in a voice of despair. Fifty François’s stared at me in amazement. What was I to do ? stop or

go on? I was looking round in doubt and dismay—when, as the mass of people who had been saying their ‘last word,’ stood off to be out of the way of the train—my eye fell on two figures holding earnest conversation as they walked briskly along to keep pace with the now quickening carriages. Presently the tallest of the two men jumped into the train; leaving the other to find a seat elsewhere. This last soon followed the example of his friend: and as he stood upon the step I recognized my guide François. Rushing forward I sprung on to the train and, climbing along the outside till I came to his carriage, entered at the window, and to François’ astonishment seated myself by his side.

“ ‘So, my friend,’ said I, speaking leisurely to recover my breath, ‘we were nearly being separated. You must have given me up for lost, did you not?’

“ ‘Truly I was almost afraid Monsieur had dispensed with my services; but I con-

cluded you had come on in this train, for I told you the man you seek would most likely go to A——.’

“ ‘ Ah ! just so,’ said I ; ‘ and you thought you had better go on alone to satisfy yourself that you had conjectured rightly. And do you still hold to your opinion ? Remember our bargain !’ I whispered. ‘ You promised we should meet him at Q——, and here we are on our way to A——.’

“ ‘ I certainly did expect to find Winter at Q——, but I was disappointed.’

“ ‘ You saw nothing of him then ?’

“ ‘ Nothing.’

“ ‘ Who were you speaking to,’ I looked at him sharply as I addressed him, ‘ just before you got into this carriage ?’

“ He was evidently startled at the question ; but after a moment’s consideration replied :

“ ‘ An old friend, whom I have not seen for some time.’

“ His coolness baffled me. I could have sworn the person I had seen him with was

no other than Winter. I suppose my looks betrayed my thoughts, for he boldly added :

“ ‘ Had Monsieur ever seen the gentleman before ?’

“ ‘ Perhaps not. He reminded me of a person I know. But now what think you ? If Winter is bound for A——, he must be in the same train with us ; and if so, may escape at the first station we stop at.’

“ ‘ If he is in this train,’ said François, ‘ we shall catch him ; for it is the express, and does not stop till we reach A——.’

“ Reassured by this piece of information, and overcome by the fatigues and excitement of a journey I had performed up till now without a moment’s rest, I fell into a sound sleep.

“ When I awoke, the train had stopped. François’ seat was vacant ; he had left the carriage. My first impression was, that I had slept through the arriving of the train at A——, and that François had deserted me with the view of getting better pay by saving

Winter. Still half-stupid I jumped up, but was prevented rushing out by tumbling over the legs of my fellow-passengers, who still quietly kept their places.

“ ‘Gentlemen!’ I exclaimed, ‘where are we? What are we stopped for? Is this A——?’

“ ‘Not yet; we are only stopping for water.’

“ ‘And my companion? is he gone?’

“ The reply was self-evident. I had hardly made the inquiry when François sneaked in, and the train went on.

“ ‘Why, François, where have you been? I thought I was going to lose you a second time.’

“ ‘I was merely stretching my legs.’

“ His return greatly relieved me, although I had little doubt the real object of his moving had been to hold some further communication with Winter—most probably to inform him of my proximity. The belief amounting almost to conviction that I had seen François

talking to Winter, together with the insight, notwithstanding our short acquaintance, I already had into the Frenchman's character, easily persuaded me that this fellow's game would be to play into the hands of both. By keeping Winter secretly advertised of my movements, and me so near that I could do all but arrest him, he might prolong the pursuit till he had made a handsome profit of my enemy, and eventually double it by delivering him up to me.

“ My only difficulty was, to account for his getting into the train when he might have supposed I was left behind at Q——. This I partly resolved by the supposition that the statement he had made when I first rejoined him in the carriage at Q—— was a true one. I looked about the watering depôt, as we left it; and, notwithstanding the darkness, thought I must have seen Winter had he got out. My greatest alarm now was lest he should again elude me at the A—— terminus. The confusion would be still

greater there than we had experienced at Q——. The tickets would be taken before we entered the town; and if a passenger chose to leave his luggage behind, he might disappear in the hurry and bustle of the crowd, before any one could have a chance of finding him. Harassed by these fears, I resolved to get out of our carriage, and walk along the outside, looking in at all the windows till I discovered Winter. François, perceiving my intention, exerted himself to the utmost to prevent me from undertaking this perilous excursion. I was not, however, to be deterred. Two-thirds of the carriages I had carefully examined: there remained but about four or five others, when my investigation was abruptly terminated by a large van or horse-box. The impediment was insurmountable, and I was forced to return after a succession of fruitless and hazardous efforts to climb past it.

“We arrived. It would be tedious to describe the repetition of a scene similar to

that which took place at Q——. I hunted up and down, inquiring of porters, policemen, station-masters, and hackney-coach drivers ; in short, was in an agony to trace him. It was all to no purpose. One only consolation cheered me. I had not for a single instant released my hold of the treacherous François. At length we left the station ; and trusting to his guidance (he was well acquainted with A——), I took up my quarters at an hotel not very unlike the one we had left at Q——. The only difference being that this inn was in every respect more filthy and disreputable than the other.

“The entrance through a crumbling doorway, scarcely wide enough to admit an ordinary coach, opened into a small dingy court-yard. On the ground floor one side of the yard was taken up by a low and vaulted chamber, part of which served as kitchen to the hostel ; the other part screened off by a partition made of wood, breast-high, and continued to the stone roof with thin

iron bars, was used as a tap or cabaret. On the opposite side of the yard was a shed, convertible at pleasure into a stable, or a 'shake-down' place for tramps ; but invariably made use of as a receptacle for the accumulated dust, rubbish, and filth of the premises. The floor above was appropriated to sleeping apartments. These rooms, lighted only by two small panes of glass let into the top pannels of the door, abutted on a rotten and shaky wooden balcony, which overhung the court-yard, and formed an out-door passage connecting the rooms on the first floor.

"Trembling at each footstep lest the creaky balcony should give way with a crash and precipitate us headlong into the yard, François and a dirty slut preceding me, I was shown into the kennel which was to be my bed-room. As the windows admitting the gloomy light from the yard were fixtures, and could not also admit even a breath of its murky atmosphere, the stagnant fustiness of the room nearly stifled me, as our

slatternly turnkey unlocked the door and again closed it to make room for three persons in the miserable chamber at once. I was too well inured to worse hardships than this to be much annoyed at the prospect of such wretched accommodation, but I saw no reason why I should put up with these quarters when better were to be had by paying for them. I remonstrated with François. He put his finger to his lips, and told me to have patience. He had reasons of his own for remaining where we were. Still weary with the effects of my journey, I left my door ajar ; and throwing myself upon my straw mattress which lay in one corner of the room, I slept till evening without once changing my position.

“About dark, I strolled out to refresh myself with a bath and some dinner. You may wonder at my coolness in thus diverting myself when my mind was so engrossed with the great aim I had in view ; but what else could I do ? Besides, I felt it would be

useless to wear myself out in what I considered as only the commencement of a pursuit which might last for weeks and months, or even for years. I was calm because I was resolute ; and I was both because of the presentiment I have before alluded to.

“ It was late when I returned to the hostel. I inquired for François. I wished to know if he had seen, or heard any tidings of Winter ; but he had not yet come in. So to wear away the time, for I had slept so long in the day that I felt as yet no inclination to go to bed, I repaired to the cabaret adjoining the kitchen. The place was filled with riff-raff of the lowest description : some were drinking coffee and playing at cards ; others, a trifle more respectable, were engaged in a match at dominoes ; some regaled themselves from time to time with small glasses of brandy ; a few were eating, but these were mostly in the kitchen. The clouds of tobacco-smoke proceeding from the pipes of nearly all so obscured the low-roofed vault, and each man

was so taken up with his own game or discussion, that my entrance was completely unobserved.

“ I seated myself in an empty corner of the cabaret, with my back to the screen and grating which separated us from the kitchen. Pondering over the probabilities of Winter’s stay in A——, and the lurking villainy of my guide François, I presently heard the name of the latter mentioned by one of two men who sat at my back eating supper in the kitchen.

“ ‘ I tell you,’ said the first speaker. ‘ it is the same ; I saw him in Q—— not six months after the murder was committed.’

“ ‘ And did he dare go back to the place so soon after ?’ inquired the other.

“ ‘ Why, you see, nothing was proved ; and Master François thought this indifference would lull suspicion.’

“ ‘ He’s a daring devil,’ said the second. ‘ He’ll come by his deserts at last, you mark my words if he doesn’t.’

“ ‘But what do you suppose he is after now, in company with yon Englishman?’

“ ‘No good, I’ll warrant.’

“ ‘I dare say he’s got himself hired as courier ; he has impudence enough for anything. If that Englishman don’t look out sharp, François will slit his weasand in some of these out-of-the-way places and bolt with the plunder.’

“ ‘Ay, just such a place as this would suit him well enough. I don’t suppose the police would ever find it out, and I’d swear the landlord would not trouble his head about it.’

“ ‘Hush !’ said the other, laughing, ‘ don’t speak so loud, they’ll hear us.’

“ Foreseeing that they might naturally turn their heads to look through the grating behind them, I stooped below the screen, and in a few minutes after left the vault.

“ I had hardly got into the yard when François returned. The conversation I had overheard induced me to watch his move-

ments, instead of calling him up, as I should otherwise have done. He did not perceive me, although he brushed close past me as he came through the archway. For a second he stopped to look in at the low window of the cabaret, then turned to cast his eye round the court-yard, in search no doubt of the figure he had passed without noticing. He saw no one; for by this time I was standing under the dark shed on the other side of the yard, whence I could perfectly observe him.

“ Disembarrassing himself of his cloak, which he hung upon the balustrade, he ascended the staircase, and with a stealthy step approached my apartment. When he reached it, he placed his ear to the keyhole and listened attentively. He then lifted the latch, but in doing so made a slight noise which caused him to desist from his first intention of opening the door. Waiting a few minutes longer, to be sure that he had disturbed no one, he carefully took out the key,

and placing it in his pocket again descended to the yard and walked hastily away.

“I remarked that he left his cloak hanging on the banisters, and concluded from this circumstance that, whether he did so purposely or through forgetfulness, he would in either case come back to fetch it. Remaining, therefore, in my hiding-place, where I had scarcely time to reflect on what had passed, François soon returned, and with him the same person I had seen him talking to at the Q—— Station.

“‘Stop a second,’ said François, ‘let us take breath first.’

“‘Well, be quick about it;’ rejoined his companion gruffly.

“‘There’s no hurry,’ said François. ‘He sleeps sound.’

“‘You’re sure he’s asleep, and that the door is not locked?’ asked the other.

“‘Certain. I have the key here; see!’

“‘Well, come on then.’

“‘Stop a second,’ said François, this

time clutching him by the arm, and drawing him into the shed to within a couple of yards of where I stood.

“ ‘Curse the coward !’ muttered the other between his teeth. ‘What’s the matter now ? Are you afraid ?’

“ ‘The bargain ! Monsieur does not forget the bargain ?’

“ ‘To hell with the bargain and you too ! Can’t you believe me, you d—d fool ? You shall have the money to-night. I have told you so a thousand times. Now, let’s settle it. Come !’

“ ‘One second.’ François still detained him in his hold. ‘Remember, I have nothing to do with it. Whether the business is accomplished or not, I get double what you paid me to-day.’

“ ‘Yes ! yes ! yes !’

“ ‘And if he kills you ?’ whispered the guide.

“ ‘Idiot !’ said the other, snatching a long knife from his breast and seizing François

as he spoke. ‘Another moment and I dispense with your assistance for ever.’”

“‘Follow then,’ said François, shaking off the grasp of his companion; and the two moved noiselessly up-stairs.

“What were my feelings as I listened to this conversation! The instant the two men entered the shed, I recognized in the companion of François the object of my hatred and revenge, Winter! Curiosity, nothing but an ungovernable desire to hear him talk, to learn his motive for coming, and to assure myself of the nature and object of his intimacy with François, withheld me from springing upon my prey unawares and strangling him on the spot.

“Without stirring from my hiding-place, the position I occupied commanded a view of the same side of the court where my bedroom was. François pointed out the door, and immediately glided off, leaving Winter to enter alone. As he cautiously raised the latch and disappeared from my sight, a

chilling shudder passed through my frame at the thought of the horrible fate Providence had so mercifully saved me from. But I had no time for reflection. I saw him come out of the room, and slam the door behind him. I stole quickly from the shed and stood in the side of the archway, close by the foot of the staircase. I heard the hollow sound of his step and the creaking of the balcony. I breathed so quickly that I thought I must alarm him. He came nearer and nearer. I trembled in every joint and sweated in every pore. His last step was on the staircase. One bound, and my hands clutched his throat !

“Who could resist the maniac strength which hatred darted through every muscle of my body ? Had he been a thousand times as strong, my fierceness must have torn him like a reed to the ground ! I see him now, his throat distorted, his terror-starting eyeballs ! A stifled shrieking gasp escaped him. One wild effort, and then a sudden relaxation

of hands. A cold numbness crept adown my back, a faint sickening sensation, a consciousness that blood was trickling from me, and then a fall, and all was darkness and oblivion !”

CHAPTER IX.

“THE first dreary rays of dawn were struggling through the dingy door-panes as I woke. At first I could not remember where I was. By degrees the door-panes reminded me of my kennel. Then a stiff feeling in the neck, as I tried to raise myself, recalled my wound. Again a dizziness clouded my senses. I strove to connect the fact of the wound with the dingy door-panes, and an indistinct recollection of Winter entering the room with a knife in his hand, induced me to think I had been murdered and was dying.

“A violent effort to shake off this horrible feeling restored my senses, and I remembered the struggle in the archway. Then rushed back upon me the one object of my life—the thought that filled my mind by day—my constant dream—my dying wife’s prediction. Had I killed him? What had become of him? How long had I lain here? Was it only last night we had met? It seemed as if I had slept for years. An intolerable thirst cloyed my mouth; I was too weak to rise. In the attempt to do so my wound started bleeding afresh. I lay down to consider what could have become of François, and pondered on his villainy; tracing the cause of my present state to the accident of bringing him with me from Q——. I heard people moving about in the yard, but could not call to them. I wondered whether they would leave me here to die. Worst of all, was the belief that Winter had escaped.

“Thus I lay, with my eyes fixed vacantly

on the door-panes. Presently I heard the balcony tremble: a step approached. It stopped outside my room. One of the dingy panes was obscured by a head peering in at me. It was so dark, I could not see the face. The door slowly opened, and the figure of a man filled the aperture. It was François. Had he come to put end to my sufferings? Would he complete the murder he had already half-committed? I did not stir. He came and stood over me. Still I did not move. He stooped down to look at my face, and brought his features so close to mine, that I felt his garlicky breath upon me. My eyes were wide open, and the moment they encountered his, he started back in horror, imagining, probably, that a dead body had been watching his movements. He was yet uncertain whether I was alive or dead, and stretched out his hand to feel my head. I thought he was going to strike me, and dashing his arm aside,

made a cry for help. But my voice, owing to the parched state of my mouth was without sound.

“ ‘Ah! my poor master,’ exclaimed he, ‘does he not know me? Thank God! he is alive, and will recover.’

“ ‘Wretch!’ I hoarsely croaked, ‘what means this? You have tried to murder me. If I had voice enough to make myself heard, I would have you seized this instant. Begone, or if it costs me my life, I will up and fling you into the yard below us!’

“ ‘Does Monsieur rave?’ said he. ‘Ask of those who saw the encounter. I was not present when you were stabbed. I came in, and found you bleeding and senseless in the archway. I carried you up here, and myself dressed the wound. Now you call me a murderer!’

“ ‘I could not articulate an answer. ‘Fetch me water,’ was all I could say.

“ ‘While he was gone, it occurred to me that the object of this visit had not been to

kill me. It might certainly have been to rifle my person if he had found me dead, but he might have done this when I was senseless. Perhaps he had not lost sight of Winter yet, and had still a prospect of making more profit, by selling me an opportunity such as he had sold to him. There was nothing to be gained by letting him know how much I had overheard. I could substantiate no accusation before the police; and if I made an open enemy of him, my best hope of again finding Winter would be cut off. I determined to alter my manner.

“ ‘Did you, then, really,’ I asked of him when I had drunken greedily of the water he brought me, ‘did you really not assist Winter last night?’

“ ‘Assist Winter! Surely Monsieur must have dreamed this in his fever. How could I assist him when I had never seen him before it happened? But I saw him afterwards,’ he added with a grin. ‘Yes, Monsieur will have reason yet to believe

François is honest. I tracked him, I never left him till I met a friend to take my place, a friend who has an eye as quick as mine. I engaged him in the service of Monsieur, and Monsieur may take his time to recover. My friend will not part with Winter as long as you make it worth his while to follow him.'

"I had no confidence in this statement, yet the chance of its being true, helped to revive me. My wound was not very deep, although it was a severe gash, and occasioned at the time considerable hæmorrhage. In two days I was sufficiently recovered to leave my bed. On the same day François, who had attended me with the greatest assiduity, brought me a letter from his friend, indicating the movements of Winter. Judging from the deliberate rate at which he now travelled, François and I were both of opinion that he had laid aside precaution, taking it for granted that the wound had proved fatal. The letter stated he had returned to the same port, and had made

inquiries respecting vessels for America. Failing to meet with such a vessel, he had taken a place in a steamer which was to cross the Channel next day. François' friend had omitted to name the hour of departure, but I did not despair of reaching the port before the steamer left it. Once on board the same vessel, it was impossible he could avoid me.

“We retraced our steps from A—— by the same line of rail which had brought us thither. Terribly exhausted by the length of the journey, and naturally weak from illness, I arrived at my destination in time to learn that the steamer had left the wharf about an hour, and was lying in the offing with all her passengers on board. At this crisis, François' zeal in my behalf entirely abated. He no longer afforded me the smallest assistance, but caused me great annoyance and some delay by his pressing entreaties for payment. He began at length to threaten me; and finding my obduracy

in no measure mitigated by his intimidations, he set to work to persuade the only boatmen at the wharf, who were not already engaged by the late passengers, on no account to give me a passage as I was a rogue and would not pay them. If I had not been so pressed for time, I should have rewarded his services by delivering the scoundrel into the hands of justice. But every instance I expected to see the steamer go. So hastening into the boat, I promised to give the watermen whatever they asked, provided they only succeeded in putting me aboard.

“After some wrangling we got off, and the two men rowed hastily with all their strength, smiling, as they went, at the loud and vehement maledictions of the disappointed François, who stood on the wharf shaking his fist till we were out of sight. When we got within about a mile of the steamer, we observed they were getting the anchor up.

“‘Now,’ said one of the men, ‘pull away. I believe we can do it yet.’

“What will the gentleman give us?” said the other, ‘it’s no use breaking our backs unless we are sure of the money.’

“‘We can’t do it under thirty francs,’ said the biggest of the two.’

“‘Pull away for God’s sake,’ said I, ‘and don’t waste breath, she is moving now. We shall be too late.’

“‘Vive Dieu!’ exclaimed the other, tugging with all his might at the oar, ‘this job is worth sixty francs, if it’s worth a sous.’

“‘You shall have it,’ cried I, ‘if we catch her.’

“I had no sooner made this promise, than one of the men, thinking my liberality too profuse to be depended on, drew in his oar, and said :

“‘Come, to make matters sure, let Monsieur put the money down now.’

“I drew out my purse, imprecating at the extortion, and urging at the same time the value of every moment they were casting away. To my surprise, and dismay I found

that, besides the English notes, with which Mr. W—— had furnished me before leaving London, I had not more than five-and-twenty francs left. I put down these, and showing the bank-notes, said, I could get them changed on board. They sneered at my offer, and repeating the charges which François had laid against me, refused to pull another stroke.

“I listened to them with the utmost consternation. Remonstrances and promises were alike in vain. I offered them the bank-notes. They tossed them back to me, declaring they were not to be cheated with false money. I called to the steamer, but the people on board either did not, or would not hear me. I was preparing myself to be again frustrated, when a fishing-smack sailed past us on its way out to sea. Hesitating only for an instant, I threw off my shoes and, hailing the boat to attract the attention of the steersman, plunged into the sea and swam away from the watermen.

“At first, the two men baulked of their

fare pulled after me and, running me down, threatened to drown me unless I came in and paid them. My condition was most precarious. In my eagerness to reach the steamer, I had forgotten my bodily incapacity to buffet with the waves. Left to myself in smooth water I could scarcely have swam a hundred yards ; but the sea was running high, and these men kept me under the bow of their boat in such a way that I must have perished, had I persisted in my endeavour to swim away from them.

“ I was fast losing strength when the fishermen, who had watched the scene—they were close enough to hear the threats of the watermen—bore down upon us, and in a few minutes dragged me half senseless on to the deck of their own vessel. They abused the two men for their disgraceful conduct, and again turning on their course, soon left the shore boat far behind in their wake. When I recovered myself sufficiently to look round, I found the steamer was paddling at full speed several miles away from us.

“ My new friends were from the island of Jersey. One of them, the owner of the boat, understood English sufficiently well. He was a hearty, honest-looking sailor, and expressed no small satisfaction at having so fortuitously rescued me from the hands of the rascally watermen. I showed him the bank-notes which the other men had so foolishly refused. He evinced his belief in their true value by wishing sincerely he might some day have the chance of refusing paper bearing the same stamp. I told him he might have the chance at once if he would undertake to carry me in his boat across the Channel. A bargain was soon struck; neither he nor his comrades offered the least objection to this change in their destination. The cruise to them was not only a more profitable one, but they had little or nothing to do, as the weather was fine and the wind favourable.

“ About ten o'clock the next night, *i.e.* to-night, I landed at Southampton; it was too late to prosecute my search. The steamer

arrived here this morning. I have ascertained that no vessel has left the port to-day for America. Winter may have gone on to Liverpool ; but, as he cannot possibly suspect I am here, he most likely will keep quiet for a day or two. It will be as important for me to hide as it is for him. Since if he discovered me before I found him, he would be off to some place where I could not again catch him. It was only by the greatest good fortune that I saw him so close after our encounter in London, as to oblige him to cross over to France. From this place he has a command of ships and railways that would, if he availed himself of them, place him in a few minutes utterly beyond my reach. I shall therefore take every precaution, and trust implicitly in the vigilance of the police ; and before this time to-morrow hope to inform you of his seizure.

“It wants but an hour of daylight ; I have sat up all night finishing this long narrative, a great part of which I wrote on

the deck of the fishing-smack as we came over. The excitement of being so near my prize has kept me awake; otherwise, my steady chase, and even the memory of my misfortunes have ceased to rouse me from the morbid state of melancholy which has settled upon my mind, never I fear to be shaken off. When Winter is taken, and my part as avenger is fulfilled, what more have I to live for? The horrible fate of my wife must haunt me wherever I go. What can I hope for her? That her wretched existence may have ended, and that my child may be without a mother! Oh! that I had starved, and had never known the misery revealed to me by that last day in London! I might at least have gone on hoping she had never come to this—that she had died—but not in such a spot as I found her. Good God! how dreadful! And what had I done to deserve such misery? But it's useless to repine. The heart of man cannot bear more than a certain amount of suffering. I have

borne that amount, and, thank God ! I feel I shall not have to bear it much longer.

“ I have throughout had a conviction I should overtake Winter at last. A presentiment no less strong possesses me that, when I have revenged my wife’s wrongs, my earthly struggles will be pretty nearly at an end ; and when this act, which a just retribution imperatively calls upon me to perform, is accomplished, I shall soon lay down the burden of life and seek that repose beyond the grave which it is impossible for me ever to find on this side of it.

“ Yours most sincerely.

“ P.S.—It is unnecessary to remind you that your presence here cannot do good, but might seriously damage our common cause.”

Pierce collected together the several sheets of this long letter, folded them up and, locking them in his desk, paced up and down the

room in uncertainty what to do. He was deeply interested in some parts of Taylor's letter, and the close of it gave him much matter for contemplation. The whole of Taylor's misfortunes were traceable to the one treacherous act of his former friend. And what was that act? Had ever he been tempted to commit such an act? He shuddered when he thought of Lady Pump-ton. Dismissing this unwelcome train of ideas, he began to think there was yet a chance of recovering his twelve thousand pounds. With such a prospect in view, he was half inclined to disregard Taylor's postscript and set off that instant for Southampton. Then he changed his mind, for he clearly perceived the danger Taylor had intimated. He had little disposition to go to the drum, but he was too much excited to stay at home alone, so he ordered a cab and drove to Lady Pip-ple-dem's.

CHAPTER X.

IT was rather late when he got there ; but it was the only dancing drum of the night, and the house was crowded from half-way up the staircase to a third of the way up to the second floor. He found Lady Pippledem on the landing. She never deserted her post, push, and crush, and squeeze as they would, the whole crowd could not have budged Lady Pippledem from the spot where she received her guests. With so many great people to shake hands with, she must have died of apoplexy (her threatening malady) if they had not moved her from the landing. The Mar-

chioness of Frumpingdown would have cut her for ever if she had not been ready, as that great lady came up, to make a lane, and say loud enough for everybody to hear: "Would you be kind enough to let Lady Frumpingdown get past." And then, what a disappointment it would have been to the whole room not to have known that the Countess of Blueblaises was at the party. All the world was ready, at the shortest notice, to fall down and worship Lady Blueblaises—it was so well known she had not her equal in the United Kingdom for saying ill-natured things and taking away people's characters. Lady Pippledem welcomed her with becoming affection, and whispered to a bystander, so that Lady Blueblaises might hear it, "What a lovely girl Lady Adlecheeser" (her seventh daughter) "is."

She was a shrewd matron, was Lady Pippledem—made a good, dashing, vulgar attempt to be a great lady, and succeeded on the main as well as the average do. Rank

was her idol—the cabalistic arts of a “Baptiste Hatton” had never been dreamed of in her philosophy—and she plumped down on her knees without more ado, and fell to worshipping it quite devoutly ; not in a sneaking, cowardly, underhand way, like some who are ashamed of what they do, yet can’t help doing it—but honestly and openly, firmly believing all the while that Rank was the most adorable deity on earth ; and considering it a very admirable trait in the human character to make the best of weak points, instead of nurturing them in secret and disavowing them in public.

Lady Blueblaises and her daughter, Lady Adlecheeser, were exchanging curtsies with their hostess, as Pierce came up to make his bow. Lady Pippledem was beaming with smiles, and trying to look as if she was not the least flustered.

“Ah! Mr. More! so glad to see you! You’ll find plenty of partners. It’s a waltz, I think.”

Pierce smiled and moved on.

“Mr. More! who would have thought of seeing you here?” said Lady Blueblaises; “We don’t often meet at balls. They’re not much in your way, I think. How very odd Lady Pippledem shouldn’t know that you don’t waltz! Poor dear Lady Pippledem! it *is* so like her.”

Lady Pippledem’s inadvertency was too good an opportunity not to be improved on by the amiable countess. Pierce smiled, shook hands, and said a word or two with Lady Adlecheeser, then turned away and met Lady Pumpton.

“Are you only just come?” she asked.

“Only just. Very charming this sort of thing, isn’t it? Such a delightful variety. It is quite a relief to see so many new faces.”

“Yes,” said Lady Pumpton, “one does get rather tired of seeing the same people every night.”

“That’s just the charm here,” said Pierce.

“For more than half of these people one is certain never to see again.”

“I wonder,” said Lady Pumpton, with an excellent look of simplicity, “where Lady Pippledem finds so many people; I never can manage a *pot pourri* of this kind.”

“She advertises for ’em, I suppose,” said Pierce. “Oh! do let me hide behind you! here comes the Peninsular hero.”

“The what?”

“The Peninsular hero, Lady Spitfire; you must know her. She is the most chattering old jay in London. If she catches me, she will trot off on Sir Pillowby’s cork leg, and I shall have no peace for the next half-hour.”

“Why does she make a martyr of you?”

“Because—Ah! it’s too late! How do you do, Lady Spitfire? What a wonderful person you are for balls! I never miss you—I mean you never miss one by any chance.”

“I used to be fond of dancing once; but,” and here Lady Spitfire drew Pierce aside.

“Do tell me, is that Lady Pumpton you were talking to?”

“Yes.”

“To be sure! how stupid of me! The beautiful Miss Trammers that was?”

“The same.”

“An old friend of yours?” whispered Lady Spitfire, tapping his shoulder with her fan.

“One of many, I hope,” replied Pierce, carelessly.

“*Fi donc, inconstant!* But that’s the way with you young gentlemen now-a-days. When Sir Pillowby was a young man—” and Lady Spitfire nodded her head, as much as to say, “You know what I mean.”

“You don’t pretend,” said Pierce, laughing, “that you allowed Sir Pillowby to convert himself at pleasure into a grand Turk!”

“Now what do you mean, Mr. More? You don’t understand me, I see. You know I was a widow when Sir Pillowby married me.”

“ Well ? ”

“ And do you imagine he never proposed before my first marriage ? To be sure he did. And after I refused half-a-dozen timea, he went to the Peninsula, and had his poor dear leg shot off in despair. Then he came back a distinguished officer, and *he* wasn't inconstant.” Lady Spitfire nodded her head this time as if to say, “ There's consolation ! there's example for you ! ”

“ Yes, but, my dear Lady Spitfire, you surely can't— ”

“ Oh ! I dare say you think Sir Pillowby was glad to get a wife at all after he lost a leg. I can tell you, when Sir Pillowby was invalided from the Peninsula, he came home covered—yes, literally covered—with glory ! He was thought a very great catch—a very great catch ! ” repeated Lady Spitfire ; lost in enthusiastic admiration of her cork-legged knight. “ Ah ! you smile ; but I assure you in those days a red coat was everything. No man was thought anything

of unless he was a soldier. Everybody went into the army; and those who did distinguish themselves by their gallant actions were heroes when they came home, and they deserved to be heroes!"

"To be sure," said Pierce: who was musing upon the contents of Taylor's letter, and the recovery of his own twelve thousand pounds.

"And if," pursued Lady Spitfire, "there was an officer who did distinguish himself, and who did deserve to be called a hero, that officer is Sir Pillowby Spitfire."

Pierce, observing that Lady Spitfire had pulled up for another acknowledgment to some remark or other, boldly asserted that "there could be no doubt of it."

"I don't think I ever told you the particulars about his leg, did I? Did I, Mr. More?"

"Yes; oh yes. Eh? What? I beg your pardon."

“ Sir Pillowby’s leg—did you ever hear about his losing it ?”

“ Oh dear yes ! many times. He showed great courage.”

“ Wonderful ! wasn’t it ? I am sure he must have died if the Duke had not rode past, just as the poor thing had been shot down, and was rolling about amidst hundreds and thousands of mutilated corpses. ‘ Spit-fire,’ says the Duke, ‘ is that you, my gallant fellow ?’ ‘ Yes, your Grace ; but never mind me ; I die happy, for I have found a soldier’s grave.’ Wasn’t that an answer ! But the Duke couldn’t rest till he had sent a couple of men to carry him to the surgeon ; and before they got him there, the enemy came up and took him prisoner. Directly they saw he was an officer, they had him carried on the shoulders of another man ; and all the way his poor dear leg went dangle, dangle against the soldiers ; and what made it worse, was, he kept his sword on, and as

it got in the way of his poor leg, they wanted to take it off, but he begged them to leave it on. ‘Gentlemen,’ said he, ‘you have shot off my leg, but I hope you will not disarm me.’ Of course the French officers wouldn’t allow it to be touched, for, said they, ‘we are sure there’s not a more gallant soldier in the battle-field this day!’

“You may fancy how astonished the Frenchmen were, and how brave they must have thought dear Sir P.: when the surgeons were cutting off his leg, he never uttered a cry; but, being a very powerful man, at one struggle kicked over the three Frenchmen who were holding down his other leg, and then raised his poor head from the ground, and seeing what he had done, begged their pardons all round.”

At this crisis Pierce yawned very rudely, to remind Lady Spitfire that her story was somewhat long. This good lady having considerably unburdened her mind by the above narration, which she made it a rule to

tell once every night, permitted her listener to depart.

Pierce rejoined Lady Pumpton—quite accidentally—but there was no one else at hand he cared to speak to. They sat together amongst the row of ‘wall flowers,’ and talked a good deal of half-sentiment, interlarded with a spice of scandal, some personal sallies, and some confidential confessions. After a while Arabella wanted tea, and Pierce took her ladyship down to the supper-room. As they were leaving the ball-room, he observed Lord Pumpton with his eyes intently fixed upon them.

The tea was very hot, and Lady Pumpton was a long time sipping at it. She stood in one corner with her back to the wall, and Pierce stood in front of her. She was more fascinating than ever. She snubbed everybody that came to speak to her, and made the snubs more marked by the contrast of her manner to Pierce. He, feeling slightly bored at first, took half a tumbler of cham-

pagne with a tea-spoonful of seltzer-water in it, just to dissipate his flatness.

The great merit of champagne is the spontaneous action of its exhilarating properties. In two minutes he was another man ; so much more up to the mark, that he became the talker now, and Lady Pumpton the listener.

Finding himself better after the first half-tumbler, he took another of the same, and really began to fancy himself in a very short time the most agreeable man he was personally acquainted with. Arabella seemed to be of the same opinion ; she laughed, and looked so happy and beautiful, that he could not help telling her how very beautiful she looked. It presently struck him that somebody was pushing and making some remark about allowing them to get an ice for a lady, so that he had to move. As he did so, he turned to the person who hustled him so impatiently ; he did not know him ; but in turning round, his eye

again rested on Lord Pumpton. That nobleman was listening to Lady Blueblaises, who was staring at them, and whispering into his lordship's ear.

Pierce was in a devil-me-care humour, and resumed his conversation with Arabella. He seasoned his remarks more exuberantly as he went on with a multitude of small *équivoques claires*, which added not a little to the general vivacity of their conversation. But the pleasures of this life are not eternal (the remark is not perfectly new); and this delightful *tête-à-tête* was suddenly terminated by the interruption of Lord Pumpton, who with very little ceremony informed her ladyship that her ladyship's carriage was at the door. As with one hand she took her husband's arm, she held out the other to Pierce, and invited him in an under tone, which Lord Pumpton overheard, though it was not intended for his ears, to come and lunch on the morrow at two o'clock. More nodded a promise, and they parted for the night.

The next day Pierce lay in bed till mid-day ; and, as had very often happened to him when he lived in the Albany, was sitting down to breakfast about half after one. A very trifling qualm of conscience caused a momentary derangement of his appetite ; but this speedily passed off in the consoling reflection that he knew a man, really an excellent fellow in his way, who for weeks and weeks together invariably breakfasted by candlelight.

“Once in a way didn’t signify the least. It was the habit of late hours that was so bad ; and this habit he had broken through long ago. Breakfast over, and a cigar smoked, it was time to dress, and walk down to Lady Pumpton’s.

Places were laid for two at the luncheon-table—a nice little luncheon it was, though Mr. More could not eat anything, having only just breakfasted, and Lady Pumpton could not eat because she had a headache.

There was perhaps a little awkwardness in the position—neither of the two ventured to make any but common-place remarks. By degrees Pierce began to converse in rather a serious tone, and Lady Pumpton kept putting her hand to her head as if she had a great pain there.

“I think,” said Mr. More, with great solemnity, “that occasional solitude is not only advantageous in a moral point of view, but it also enables us to enjoy with greater zest the pleasures of society when we return to them.”

“And it is on this account you have decided to run away and live like a hermit?”

“Yes ; I have long contemplated such an experiment, and hope at last to put it in execution.”

“You must be very fond of your own society to prefer it to that of every one else in the world.”

“I have plenty of occupations, and do not

feel the loss of society. But it is not for the love of my own company that I purpose to lead for a short time a solitary existence. You know, till quite lately, I have been living out of the world. I was happier then than I am now. I wish I had never broken through my good resolve not to return to my old ways. But living in London as I have done, it was impossible to resist temptation."

"But they say there is no merit in avoiding temptation. We ought to face it boldly instead of shrinking from it like cowards. Some people are strong-minded enough to live in the midst of temptation without danger. Perhaps, though, they are usually people with very little feeling."

"Doubtless you are right. It is not always those who act most judiciously and calmly that possess the greatest strength of mind. Where the passions are not strong, the reasoning powers which govern them

may possibly be very feeble. I do not question which condition is the most noble, but I almost think that moderate passions needing but moderate control, ensure the happiest results."

"When such a constitution is aided by a philosophical turn of mind," said Lady Pumpton, "its calm indifference to the storms in which common hearts are wrecked must indeed be enviable!"

Pierce glanced at the speaker. She had uttered these last words in a tone of bitterness: her face was flushed, and he could not be sure, but he thought there was a tear in her eye. He was surprised, and touched. No thought could be further from his intention than to wound her feelings. He had no idea how far his flirtation had gone. He never supposed Lady Pumpton could feel very deeply about anything, or anybody. He knew she liked him, and thought it was her nature to be a flirt, and

that it was her present whim and amusement to flirt with him. Flattered with this show of preference from a woman whose beauty he had always greatly admired, he had yielded to the charm of her society : and, although he had carefully avoided pretending an affection he did not feel, we have seen that under an accidental influence, on the night before, he made use of expressions which would never have escaped him in more sober moments.

The sort of feeling he had hitherto entertained towards Lady Pumpton was such as any man whose affections were only partly pre-engaged might have felt for any pretty woman who pleased his vanity by her constant smiles. The sudden fit of passion with which he had so fierce a contest after coming home from Lady Pumpton's party, and which terminated to his honour through the revival of a once loved image, was nothing more than an outburst of his ardent and impetuous

nature. He then experienced the dangers such a nature exposed him to. It was eye-love that had then played round the surface of his heart : now for the first time he awoke to the danger of the plots and counterplots, the insidious sympathies and undermining fires by which the subtle demon worked—the more to be dreaded the nearer the evil spirit resembled the good.

A thought of Winter crossed him. The picture Taylor had drawn of his hopeless melancholy state, and the scene he himself had witnessed in the garret of the widow's house vividly passed before him. He shuddered. A vision of Lady Eda broke upon him ; a ray of conscience ; and again he resolved. And resolved rightly. All these were rapid thoughts, and came and went in the single instant it took him to look across the room.

“ If,” he rejoined, “ philosophy could change our natures as easily as it can point out their

errors, the combination you speak of would truly be a happy one."

"How happy you ought to be, Mr. More, with all your moral maxims."

"I! you never were more mistaken in your life. No! depend upon it, those who lay down most rules for happiness do so because they of all people have found the most need of them. But I must go; I have some calls to make."

"Oh! don't go yet," said Lady Pump-ton, smiling cheerfully, and laying aside her pensive manner. "There is no reason why we should be so desperately serious and gloomy."

The conversation took a more lively turn. After a time they went up-stairs to Lady Pumpton's sitting-room. Pierce made one or two attempts to go away, but some trifling circumstance as often intervened to stop him.

"By the bye, the 'drawing-room' is on

that very day," said Lady Pumpton, *àpropos* to his departure. "You must stop for that, and go down the day after."

"Didn't you know I have never been presented!"

"Not, really!"

"Yes, really! it's a fact I assure you; and what is more, I have put it off so long, I feel somewhat ashamed to do allegiance for the first time in my old age."

"I suspect that's not the only reason. I believe you to be a bit of a Chartist."

"No, upon my honour! my principal objection is having to undergo the serio-comic pantomime of the thing. I am as loyal as any one of her Majesty's subjects, but I don't see that I prove my loyalty by performing a ceremony, the climax of which would probably be to tumble over my sword, and stick the point into the eye of the gentleman usher behind me, as I fell head foremost into the Queen's lap."

“What an idea ! but you surely would do nothing of the kind ; you have only to kiss the hand at the right time, and—”

“Ah ! but that’s precisely the difficulty. Fancy if, by accident, one should give a smack that would make the whole court jump.”

“Nonsense ! you would do it perfectly. Come, you shall rehearse. I am the Queen. Your name is called. You walk up so—that’s right ; now kneel so—perfection ! now kiss my hand, so.”

“By God ! I have caught you at last, have I ?” roared a voice of thunder.

Lord Pumpton stood in the centre of the room.

Pierce was on one knee ; with the fair hand of the imaginary queen pressed to his lips. He sprang to his feet in time to defend himself from the blow Lord Pumpton aimed at him with a heavy walking-stick.

“Scoundrel,” muttered his lordship, grind-

ing his teeth with fury, "get out of my house, or I'll murder you."

"You shall answer for this blow, Sir," said Pierce, white and trembling.

"Get out, Sir, or I'll thrash you till you can't move."

"What?" screamed Pierce, springing at him like a tiger; "do you threaten me?"

"Henry! Pumpton!" cried his wife, throwing herself between the combatants and clinging to her husband's arm! "for God's sake——"

"Let me go, you ——, or I'll strike you."

"Mr. More," said Lady Pumpton, "leave us—I entreat you—this instant leave us."

"Yes," said Pierce, as he shook off his opponent's grasp, "this is no way to settle disputes of this kind. Lord Pumpton," he continued, with his hand on the door, "your foul suspicions are an insult to your wife you can never atone for. Your conduct to me

can be satisfactorily explained without difficulty, and without loss of time!"

He rushed from the house, jumped into a cab, and drove straight to No. — Jermyn Street, the lodgings of Mr. Arthur Longvale.

CHAPTER XI.

“Is Mr. Longvale at home?” he inquired of the valet who opened the door.

“Yes, Sir? please to walk up.”

“Is he alone?”

“No, Sir, there are two gentlemen with him.”

“Who are they? do you know?”

“Lord Drivletale and Mr. Sillibub.”

“The devil take ’em.”

“Sir?”

“Have they been here long?”

“No, Sir, not above half-an-hour.”

“Confound it, I’ll call again.”

“Very good, Sir.”

“No, I’ll see Mr. Longvale now.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Ah, Pierce!” exclaimed Lord Drivletail and Arthur in a breath; “talk of the old gentleman and here he is.”

“How are you, More?” said Mr. Sil-libub.

“Why you look,” said Lord Drivletail, “as if you’d had a row with a cabby for wanting more than his fare? What’s the matter, old fellow?”

“There’s a first-rate backy,” drawled Mr. Sillibub, offering Pierce a bundle of Mr. Longvale’s cigars. “They’re some I recommended him to get from Stocken and Beynon’s; they’re only fifty shillings a-pound, but that ain’t dear when you know he is the only tobacconist in London that has the genuwyne; for my part, unless a ’gar is tip-top, I’d rather smoke a clay ten to one. What do you say, eh, Drivvey?”

“My constitution won’t stand trifling with,”

replied his lordship, seriously; and indeed, he seemed to be speaking the truth, for he was a delicate boy of about eighteen, and had already tasted to nausea most of the pleasures of life. If his constitution had not once been fifty times stronger than it was now, he would not have survived the continued strain of profligacy and debauch, which, before he was twenty years old, had become habitual to him.

“What have you been doing with yourself, Pierce? I never see you at the Coventry, or Pratt’s, or the Garrick, or anywhere. I wish you would be a little more sociable.”

“You’d better come with us to Jullien’s to-night,” said Mr. Sillibub “we’ve got a box there if you like to come.”

“Ay, do,” said Lord Drivetail, “I’ve got a capital box, and I’ve asked these two fellows, but there’ll be lots of room for another.”

“We dine at Grillon’s,” said Mr. Sillibub; “you’d better come there too: Drivvey gives

the dinner ; I dare say he don't mind, do you, Drivvey ?”

“ I shall be too delighted, if he'll come.”

“ I am afraid,” said Pierce, “ I cannot manage it. I am rather particularly engaged to-night ; I wanted to speak with you, Arthur, some time when you have five minutes to spare.”

“ That's a hint to us, Bobby,” said the young peer.

“ All right, there's no hurry, I suppose ; where's the *cogniac*, Pug ?”

This was addressed to Longvale. The *cogniac* being produced, and Mr. Sillibub having officiated as butler, by pouring out three small glasses (More declined the cordial waters), he lighted a fresh cigar, and with “ Bell's Life ” in his hands, made himself at home for another half-hour. At the expiration of that period, which in Pierce's estimation was at least six times as long, Lord Drivetail and his satellite took their leave.

“ I thought,” ejaculated Pierce, “ that ass Sillibub was going to stop all day. Thank

Heaven ! he's gone at last. And, now, Arthur, I want you to be my friend."

" Well, I am, ain't I ?"

" You always have been ; but now I want your friendly assistance. I have had a row with Pump-ton ; and mean to fight him."

" Dash it, old boy ! But let's hear the particulars. I can't do anything till I know all about it. What the deuce have you been up to ?"

More related the circumstances of the quarrel as truthfully as his excitement permitted ; and, having done so, concluded by assuring his friend that nothing short of fighting could possibly satisfy him ; as a blow admitted of no apology.

" That's all very well," returned Arthur. " But if you consider the matter calmly, the whole scrimmage has originated in a stupid misconception on the part of Pump-ton."

" And how, I should like to know," replied the other, impatiently, " do half the quarrels of this kind begin ? Because Lord Pump-ton chooses to be a fool and make a mis-

take, am I coolly to submit to be struck, and threatened to be thrashed by him? Preposterous!"

"Yes! yes! but the question is, had he, or had he not, sufficient grounds for suspicion? You know best, whether your manner to my lady was at all *empressé*. Of course, if it was—and then he finds you on your knees kissing his wife's hand—it strikes me, old fellow, he was perfectly justified in pitching into you. Put the case to yourself: how should you like to find Pumpton on his knees kissing your wife—say Eda, for instance?"

"Tush! What's the use of talking in that way? If you won't be my second, say so, and I'll find somebody else who will."

"Well, don't quarrel with me," said Arthur, laughing good humouredly. "Leave the matter in my hands, and I'll be answerable that you shall shoot each other to your heart's content; or else that your honour shall be perfectly vindicated."

"The matter admits of no delay," said Pierce; "you must go at once, and require Pumpton to appoint an hour to-morrow morning at latest. I would wish if possible to have the thing over before my blood has time to cool. I might, if it was put off, shrink from an act I dare not suffer myself to reason upon."

He left Longvale and walked home.

It is as much the property of a good conductor of heat to part with its caloric quickly, as it is to receive it quickly. Long ere Pierce reached his lodgings, every trace of anger was effaced. And then he began to reason with himself, notwithstanding his intention to the contrary. He blushed at the folly which had led him into this inextricable pass.

"What a fool I am!" thought he. "Had I pondered for an instant on those sinister looks with which Pumpton ever watched my intercourse with his wife, I must have foreseen that he would not long have waited for

a pretence to demand an explanation of my conduct. I had so persuaded myself the flirtation was perfectly innocent on my part, and I had so little right to suppose that a beautiful woman like Arabella Pump-ton was in love with me, that I treated his jealousy with disdain; and in truth thought it would do him good and make him appreciate his wife rather more. Then, by an accursed piece of ill luck, with all this jealousy and suspicion in his head, he finds me on my knees kissing his wife's hand. Was there ever such an ill-fated wretch as I? And now I am going to fight him; perhaps to kill him; or, just as likely, get a bullet through my own brains. And for what? Because he found me innocently amusing myself by rehearsing an imaginary presentation at Court. And, instead of looking on and laughing, as he would have done, if he had known there was not a thought in my head at the time prejudicial to his honour, he rushes at me, like an infuriated madman,

and tries to cut me down with a stick. If it hadn't been for that—if he hadn't struck me—I might have explained. But as it happened, explanation is out of the question. It is not to be expected that I could have offered an explanation when I was in such a rage I could hardly speak. But afterwards—now, for instance—I might have explained. I should have done so, I am sure. But the blow ! Ay, there's the thing ! He would think me a coward. Society would say I was a coward. I should be a coward if I put up with a blow. No ! there is no help for it. We must fight.

“And what if either of us are killed ! If I kill him, or he kills me ? If, that is, to-morrow morning when we shoot at one another, one of us suddenly feels a ball go through a vital part—a most infernal sensation when it comes to the reality—calls out ‘My God !’ and falls down dead. I have seen it all happen so ; and thought it very awful to look at poor Jack Wilson's dead

face, with the black blood oozing from his nostrils, and the little spot in his chest no bigger than a pea. But that's how it will be—and no mistake about it—if one of us is killed. Then, if it is him, I might never forgive myself—when I look at his body and think he would be alive if I had not been too proud to speak half a-dozen words of explanation. And, again, if it is I who lie there dead, where will that part of me be that isn't shot? Not much the better off, I expect, for the last of my earthly acts. There's little enough doubt, whatever the laws of society may dictate, the laws of God are distinctly at variance with them on this particular point. And, as there is a good chance of being called to account by the last if I get knocked on the head in obedience to the other, it seems at least unwise to fight a duel. I almost hope Arthur may settle the thing amicably; I do indeed. I have a good mind to go myself, and—No, no—it won't do. All this sudden

turn of goodness is, I suspect, an ingenious piece of sophistry on the part of my mind to exculpate me from charging myself with cowardice. But it's no use. I do not like to be killed. Who does? I am a coward; at least I am inclined to be one. But I won't be a coward. Then again—confusion seize this sophistry!—am I not a coward in shrinking from the right course? Evidently the dread of the world's censure, nothing else, deters me from obeying the Christian law. This dread is surely as great and a more despicable cowardice than the other. Here I fear man's opinion of me. There would be some merit in fearing to disobey my conscience, especially as I may be so very soon called to answer for it. But what can excuse my fear of the world?

“It's a mighty difficult point. If I felt quite certain in my own mind, which I do not by any means feel, that I was not the least bit of a coward, I would away and explain to Pumpton at once. But for the

life of me I can't say how I am influenced. I don't see the line of demarcation, which distinguishes moral bravery and physical bravery. I don't know how much I am actuated by moral cowardice, or how much by physical. And so, as I am but a wretched, short-sighted, human being, placed in a particular society, I suppose I must act as other wretches do, who are similarly situated, and trust the rest to Him who knows us. If by this time to-morrow I am out of this world, having left my body stiffened and cold with a bullet through it, may He have mercy upon me in the next !”

He had scarcely settled this casuistical point, when Mrs. Daniels entered to inform him that a little boy was waiting down-stairs with a message. The little boy, who was no other than Johnny's old playmate, had come with a frightened face to say, his mother the widow would be greatly obliged to Mr. More if he would step over to the court directly. Pierce would much rather

have staid at home that afternoon to arrange his papers ; many of which he did not wish to survive him. He had a long letter to write to Mr. Gregory, to be sent, in case of his death, with a last request to that good old man to provide for the future welfare of Master Johnny.

Taylor's letters, also his wife's, Pierce intended to put Mr. Gregory in possession of ; hoping he might perchance trace out the poor woman's father, whom she so earnestly entreated him to discover for the sake of her child. There were a multitude of things to be done, when the time was so short to do them in : and not the least important was a sincere desire to prepare his mind for its great change. But it seemed selfish to deny the poor widow's request. She might be ill, or in distress. He felt some remorse, too, for having visited her so seldom of late. So he cheerfully followed the little boy, who conducted him in great haste to his mother's house.

At every turn in the streets, Pierce's attention was attracted by some object which had become familiar to him in those happy days, when only a few weeks back he had virtuously passed them on his way to perform some kind office to the poor of the neighbourhood. He sighed to think how, from relaxing in these duties, then so pleasant, he fell again into his old habits; and, from gradually becoming unsettled and ill at peace with himself, he had been on the verge of committing an atrocious crime, which, although uncommitted, might yet result in the loss of his life. Each of these objects he looked at with a thoughtful melancholy, lest he might never see them again. There was nothing in the objects themselves to engage his attachment, but they seemed somehow to realize the existence he was, perhaps, about to quit.

The widow was indeed in distress. There she sat on the threshold of her doorway; shivering, and crying, and hugging her sickly

baby ; hugging it in her thin arms, for she had nothing else to keep it from the cold. The wind blew rawly, making the outside door creak on its one hinge, and the wet sleet was blown past her into the room. The sleet, though partly frozen, was wet before it got into the room ; for, assuredly, the cold brick-floor never would have melted it. Not a chair, nor a table, nor a mattress, nor a blanket, nor a cloth, nor a rag, was in the room. Not so much as a mug to drink the cold water out of. And how the chimney whistled ! It was a straight, low chimney. The sleet came straight down it into the room. And the sickly baby cried continuously, and the mother shivered and moaned, and rocked up and down upon the threshold ; for it was the only place to sit upon.

When Tommy had brought the gentleman to the door, he ran in before him, and threw his arms round his mother's neck ; and her thin tear-harrowed face seemed to catch a

momentary brightness from the sanguine hopes which lighted up the hollow little cheeks of the child.

“The gentleman’s come, mother.”

“Is he, dear?” said the mother.

“We shall get something to eat now, mother.”

“I hope so dear,” but so despondingly she said it, that the poor child was downcast in a moment.

“Shan’t we get anything to eat then, mother?”

“Don’t worry me so, there’s a dear child. Come in, Sir.”

She was too languid to rise.

“Dear me!” said Pierce kindly. “Why, I am sorry to see you looking so ill and so unhappy. Why do you sit out here in the draft this miserable day?”

“Oh! Sir, it’s worse in the room. They’ve took all my furniture away, and I was forced to send for you, Sir. I hope, you won’t be angry, Sir.”

“Angry? No! I wish you had sent to me sooner.”

“I thought, Sir, perhaps you would be looking round the court some day, so I wouldn’t send. But I have been getting worse every day, till I could bear it no longer, Sir. The children suffer so: if it wasn’t for them, I wouldn’t have troubled you, Sir. I’m sure, I wouldn’t.”

“I wish I had looked round here.” Pierce spoke sincerely. “Well, well, we must manage to make things look a little more comfortable. I suppose they have distrained for rent? That’s a bad business. Who’s that in the court,” said Pierce, speaking cheerfully all the time. “Ah! that’s Leeson, he’ll be glad of a job, I know. Here, Leeson, go and buy me half a hundred of coals, and fetch ’em here directly, there’s a good fellow; here is the money, and here’s sixpence for yourself. Now, Billy, Tommy, what’s-your-name, do you think if I gave you two shillings to run round to Tothill Street

and buy two loaves of bread, and a pound of beef, and a pot of beer, that you would stop on the way back, and eat them all up?"

"No," said Tommy, very demurely.

"Then start," said Pierce, "and if ever you want me to send for more, get back here as quick as ever you can. Why, where have all your neighbours got to, Miles? Don't they help you a bit sometimes?"

"Poor things, there's some of 'em not much better off than me; and such a day as this ain't fit for people to get about. Mrs. Payne, here, next door, she was in to see me this morning, but she's got so many children, and her husband's ill a-bed, she can't help me much."

"I'll be back in a minute," said Pierce; and away he ran through sleet and slop till he reached Tothill Street; there he entered a shop, and bought a pair of the thickest blankets he could find. When they were done up into a great big parcel, the boy who was to carry them had to look for an umbrella:

but Pierce was in a hurry, so he took the bundle in his arms, and ran back all the way without stopping to the widow's court.

Soon after he got there, and had untied the parcel, and thrown one of the new blankets over the widows' shoulders, and had folded the other on the floor for her to sit upon, and just as he had borrowed a chair from an old woman in the yard who happened to have two, Tommy came running in with a foaming pot of beer, held tight in both hands. He kept his eyes so fixed on the froth at the top, lest any of it should be spilt, that he ran straight against the man with the coals, and the man with the coals as near as could be fell right over him, but he didn't, and there was hardly a drop of the beer spilt; and before long the loaves came, and instead of a pound of raw beef, a great big plate piled up ever so high with slices of hot 'alamode beef,' which Tommy happened to see smoking in a window, and took such a fancy to that he ordered ninepenny

worth immediately. Then Leeson, who was a handy lad, a kind-hearted neighbourly fellow, and who would have done anything for Pierce, set to work to light the fire. A roaring fire he made of it. The floor soon dried up, the room was soon warm and cozy, and Tommy pegged away at the bread and the hot 'alamode beef,' and drank an astonishing quantity of beer for a boy of his size; so much so that when Mrs. Miles had drank all she wanted, Pierce made Leeson empty the pot, lest Master Tommy should get too jolly on the occasion.

Poor widow! she smiled through her tears, and wept through her smiles. Her heart was so full of thanks, she didn't know what to do with herself. She never had been so comfortable in all her life before. But a sudden check came across her joy:—the *to-morrow*! Her coals would be seized, her magnificent new blankets would be forfeited, the alamode beef would be finished on that day; and the rent would still be unpaid. The

cold and starvation would come again, and how would she dare to send for the gentleman a second time? He had done so much for them. She could not expect more help. She bent her head down, and sobbed afresh.

“Halloa!” said Pierce, “what’s this? We mustn’t have any more crying, Miles. We must all be merry and cheerful now, musn’t we, Tommy, eh?”

Still the widow sobbed.

“What’s the matter, Miles? what is it?”

“They’ll come again to-morrow, Sir, I’m sure they will, and take away the blankets, and that won’t pay the rent.”

“Come, come, you mustn’t fret about to-morrow. We can’t say what may happen before to-morrow!”

“Oh! but I know they’ll come, I know they will!”

“If,” said Pierce, “you had only taken my advice a month ago, and had left this parish, which cannot give you relief, and had allowed them to send you to your own

parish, we should not have been in such a sorry plight now."

"I wish I had, I'm sure I do; but they used to let me have bread once, and I thought if I could get that again, I might do a little work, and stop on here, where I have more folks as knows me than I have in my husband's parish. It is such a very long way to go, and in a strange country too."

Pierce was perplexed, as well as the widow, at the thoughts of the morrow; and for more reasons than one. He was unable to console her. The quarter-day had passed, and Bellerby had neither paid the fourth part of the three hundred pounds, nor had he replied to certain pressing letters Pierce had written him on the subject. His own small purse had been almost empty for the last fortnight or more; and of the few shillings remaining to him he had just expended so many that it was not in his power to defray the widow's debts, should he even give her all he had left.

A good portion of Johnny's fortune had been made over to Mrs. Daniels in payment of her charge, and the expenses incurred by that good woman in food and raiment for the child. Pierce was persuaded that nothing but Mrs. Daniels' ignorance of the state of his finances could have induced her to accept the payment which he very properly insisted on her taking. The rest of the money left by Winter with Johnny's mother was carefully laid aside. This, of course, he could not appropriate to his own use. But considering well the obligations under which Johnny was bound to the poor woman, whose roof had afforded gratuitous shelter to his mother, he thought it would not be unjust to borrow the requisite sum from the child; resolving, at the same time, to repay it at some future period, or even the next day, if he should be killed, by the sale of his effects.

"If," said Pierce, "you will promise to let me send you to your own parish as soon as

you are well enough to go, I will undertake to pay the rent. But mind it is useless to deceive you. You must not hope for any further help from me. I have no means to help you; and it is besides very likely I may leave London to-morrow never to return."

The widow was filled with joy at the first part of this intelligence; but the prospect of her being left for ever without such a friend as Pierce to rely upon, made her so unhappy, that she again fell to sobbing most bitterly.

The necessity of leaving the poor woman under no delusions concerning her forlorn position, and consequently of throwing a damp upon this otherwise happy occasion, caused Pierce much pain and regret. He, however, did his utmost to dispel her sorrow by cheerfully directing her to hope for the best, assuring her that God never deserts the afflicted when they call upon Him in a contrite and trustful spirit. With this, he

took his leave ; but soon returned, bringing the money for the rent.

The widow's gratitude brought tears to his eyes ; and when, after calling on the overseers of the parish, and making the necessary arrangements for her removal, he again, in the evening, reached his own lodgings, it was with a gladdened heart and a conscience more at ease, that he sat down to write his last letter to Mr. Gregory. He had not been long thus engaged when Arthur Longvale joined him.

"Well, Pierce," exclaimed his friend, "are you prepared for the worst?"

"I am prepared to fight, Arthur. I wish I was as well prepared to die. What have you done?"

"I did my best to arrange matters peaceably, but Pumpton is a pig-headed ass ! and I hope to goodness you'll send a bullet through him to bring him to his senses."

"He means to fight, does he?"

"He means nothing else. I explained to

him the mistake he was labouring under; but he swears it's all a lie. I never saw a man so violent in my life—and Pumpton, too, of all fellows! I didn't think he had so much go in him. It was absurd talking to him. In fact, he wanted to insult me; and I should have had to shoot him on my own account if I had stopped much longer; so I begged him to refer me to his second. This he did. Diggy Squibs was the man. You know him—he's in the Blues. Well, I called on Diggy, and talked the matter over. He's a deuced sensible fellow, Diggy, and of course wanted to do the thing quietly. He called on Pumpton, and I waited for him at the Coventry. I have just left him; and the upshot is that Pumpton won't hear of a reconciliation; and you'll have to meet him to-morrow morning at daylight at the bottom of that lane—you remember walking there with me—that joins the Clapham and Wandsworth roads, about four miles out of town."

“I know the place. We’ll go together. I will call and pick you up in a Hansom. I shall be with you early, Arthur, because I know you are a late bird, and require some waking.”

“Dash it, old boy, you don’t think I’m going to bed, when perhaps it may be the last few hours we spend together! Confound it! no. We’ll make a night of it somehow. What I advise you to do, is to come with me to Saville House, and have at least an hour’s practice with the barking-irons. You’re a clipping shot I know, but it would be as well to make sure; because Pumpton is not so bad, and he might pink you by a fluke.”

Pierce smiled.

“My dear Arthur, you wouldn’t have me commit murder, would you? No, no. If Pumpton shoots me, why there’s an end of it. If he chooses to go on blazing till he does hit me, I can’t help it. You may take your oath of one thing; if I hit him my

hand will be a deal more unsteady than I expect it to be."

"By the soul of my grandfather's donkey, you don't mean to say you are going to let that man make a target of you for nothing? Perfect madness! Self-defence authorizes you to shoot him without compunction. I like Pumpton very well, but hang it, old boy, I wouldn't have quite so much consideration for him as all that."

"You know, Arthur," said Pierce quietly, "what an obstinate being I am when my mind is made up. Let us change the subject, there's a good fellow. As to making a night of it, take my advice, and go to roost. You'll be up early, and—and you see, I rather want to put my papers straight; so we will smoke a quiet pipe, and part for the present."

"What an odd chap you are! One would think we were only going off by an early train to play tennis at Hampton Court. Well, at all events, I can help you to arrange

your things. I think, old boy, I know most of your secrets. You know most of mine."

"I have no secrets, Arthur ; but, to be plain with you, I should like to be alone."

"I know what it is," returned the other, reluctantly taking up his hat to depart ; "you want to have your serious thoughts all to yourself, and I don't suppose I could help you much there. I wish I could ; and I wish I was as steady and right as you are. I dare say you wouldn't think it, but I am deuced serious sometimes, and feel that I ought to be better. But somehow this London life is against it. Well, God bless you, Pierce ! You know you have one friend who'll pipe his eye if you come to grief."

So saying, the two friends separated : both with stronger feelings at their hearts than either thought becoming or requisite to express.

CHAPTER XII.

THE evening wore away. Pierce's letters were written. A pile of smouldering papers lay beneath the grate. There remained to him no care for his worldly goods; the uncertainty of life left but one direction for his thoughts. He had seen death in many shapes; each revision was less appalling than the one before. He had many times escaped death; such narrow escapes inspire a blind idea of immortality. Yet no—he, like all, must die. The reflection is so familiar! In hours of health it rests lightly on the mind, unimpressive.

The only certainty in life—of all events in life the most appalling—Death, troubles us not until we come to die. Nay, how many court death—sigh for death—groan for death! What are they thinking of? Can it be their present woes rather than their past offences? They dream of death as rest—eternal rest. Will death redeem the promise? The reflection is so familiar! If it was not—and in the midst of heedless living we could once, now and then, realize death without dying—if we could with a living consciousness experience the change creeping over us—filthy corruption benumbing all our senses and our faculties—know ourselves to be here alive, with known and tangible objects about us—with hope still left too—and the while to be going—going—powerlessly going—*whither?* * * *

Yes, short as was now his time, he never yet had so much in which to mete the contracted span of life! Ah! if he had but a few days more—a week or so—how he would live to redeem the days that were gone!

But they were not to be had for the wishing. Bad or good as he was then, with much or little to answer for—perfect or imperfect—it made small difference now! But in a few hours it would make some—ay, all the difference.

It was not a time to think of much else—but there was yet one small box to close. Uppermost of its contents lay the little sketch of Lady Eda. He took it in his hand: and his glistening eyes still resting upon that face, in a fit of moody abstraction half uttered:

“Could earthly passions disturb me as this has done? Poor fool! Yet it has exercised an influence—a divine and purifying influence upon me. How often have all base motives fled before the ennobling thought that made me strive to be more worthy of thee, Eda! As I soared from the dark abyss of my imperfections, the light to which I aspired grew purer and still purer in its brightness; cheering me onward with gentle warmth; of-

fering increased reward to winning perseverance.

“ As cling the tender clasps of the vine to the trellis of some sunned cottage, so have the fibres of my spirit twined themselves in loving confidence around thy heavenly nature. Thou taught'st me first to dream of hope at rest;—and to inhale with thee the honeyed fragrance of a long-sown fantasy. Oh, what joy ! to drink the balm of love returned,—from lips that breathed its heavenliest grace !

“ But all my past existence has been a dream. What else were this ?—I was young ; but not in sorrow. Listlessly I floated on life's quick stream, powerless, and having little will to stem its ceaseless flow. Before me spread a stagnant ocean. Its pitchy waters exhaled darkness and corruption. A vision rose from out the stream of life, and hovered mid-air above me. It was a woman's form. Her hair, like flakes of night, half-veiled a face of purity. Not joy nor sorrow dwelt about her features ;

but some mystery of unrevealed thought—the stamp of an imprisoned soul doomed for a while to radiate internally. Onward I floated, insensible, attracted by her retreating form. Still the distance of the horrid pool glided into nearness. Seeing my danger, she stretched forth a hand to save me. I seized it: and with the touch my being was reanimated. Spirit of life, I worshipped thee!

“Upward we soared through heaven’s peaceful vaults—the stillness mocking the wrathful wars beneath us. And now what things she taught me! But I was blinded with the light, and again she showed me earth. It was the hour of my life when day and night were blended in dubious sovereignty. The freshness of nature’s first creation ‘that glowed around her’ had yet to conquer the chilly vapours which clung to me. She pointed downward, and spoke:

“ ‘Wouldst thou, like other crawling worms, be blind for ever? Not in thy

loftiest flights hast thou traced the mere outline of those mighty altitudes, beneath whose shadows are reared Edens of prolific beauty. The native offspring of these tropic regions compass not the measurement of heaven's distant orbs, but watch in patient wonder the living fire that first dispels, then leaves again, a veil of softest shade. They seek no revelation, but worship the mighty Cause. All here is love !

“ ‘ Spirit of Love ! I worship thee !’

“ ‘ Still impure ?’ she said. ‘ I brought thee from the hemisphere of sin, and wouldst thou now return ? Mark how the East is bursting into glory : decked in heavenliest hues she celebrates the coming of yon flaming orb. He leaves the world of sin behind. There his hot embrace begets incessant life from life's decay. On us he will pour down his fiercest rays, but on this high mountain peak these chaste crystal dewes shall smile unchanged by his corrupting fires. Wilt thou never learn ? We must onward—’ ”

“Ah!” cried Pierce, starting from his reverie, as he raised his eyes, and beheld the tall form of a woman standing before him.

He thought she was some unearthly apparition come to warn him. Her looks were wild and agitated.

“You are astonished,” said Lady Pump-ton, for she it was; and she seemed as if going to faint, so very pale was she, and her breathing so laboured.

Pierce rushed to support her. She waved her hand, and pointed to his chair.

“Be seated; and when I can speak, hear me.”

He looked at her in bewilderment. Presently she broke the silence.

“You must not fight! I am here to stop you—to spare bloodshed. Promise me,” she clasped her hands imploringly, “promise me you will not fight!”

“Lady Pumpton,” he rose and respectfully took her hand, “heartily do I wish that I

could promise as you ask. I cannot do so."

"You purpose then to commit a murder in cold blood?"

"Your husband's life is safe. If either falls, my hand will not deal the wound."

"More doubly certain then is your fate. You shall not fight."

"Dear Lady Pumpton, calm yourself. My fate is decreed. No intervention can avert it. I fight because I must fight. I have no presentiment of evil. Bethink you, would it not be more kind to leave me. These entreaties can have but one effect; they may unnerve me, but cannot alter my determination."

"He will not hear me then, and I shall be his murderess!" Her hands concealed her face, and she was fearfully agitated. She muttered to herself: "His murderess! Murder *him*!" she repeated wildly. Then, by a violent effort of control, she checked herself. The tears streamed

through her fingers. Dashing away the drops that dimmed her sight, she looked at him fixedly, and slowly said: "Pierce More, do you not know that I *love* you?"

Deeply distressed, he remained silent. The words had scarcely passed her lips when the sketch of Lady Eda met her view. She snatched it eagerly from the table.

"Eda Longvale!" she said. "'Twas this I saw you kiss as I entered unobserved. When I asked you, you did not tell me that you loved her. I was deceived."

Haughtily she left the room.

When alone, he recalled the beautiful form of the passionate being who had just stood before him. He was bewildered; it was all so like a dream. Again he took up the unfinished sketch—again he kissed it.

"Yes, Eda," he fervently murmured, "even at this late hour there is no guilt in the confession!"

CHAPTER XIII.

It wanted yet two hours of day-break when Pierce left his lodgings, and repaired in a hack-carriage to the house of his friend. Arthur was already astir; for he had ordered his valet to sit up, that he might be called in time. It was a cold foggy morning, and Longvale took care to wrap himself up well in thick coats and shawls. Pierce had come out with no extra covering, and had need of some patience in waiting for his friend's preparations. The pistols also had to be re-examined for the last time, lest anything should be out of order. Satisfied at length

that he had forgotten nothing, Arthur declared himself ready; and the two rattled off to the scene of action.

They were first on the ground. Not long after they reached the appointed lane, Lord Pumpton's second joined them. He expected his principal every minute. But the principal came not. They looked at their watches. He was half-an-hour late. He is an hour late.

"Are you quite sure," said Pierce, addressing himself to Mr. Squibs, "that Lord Pumpton knows exactly where the meeting was to take place?"

"Oh! I am quite certain of that," replied the second; "he has passed the place fifty times going and coming from the races. I can't think what makes him so late."

"It's just like his selfish want of consideration," said Arthur, swinging his arms to promote circulation. "I dare say he thinks it's mighty fine to keep us three with our teeth

chattering, while he sips his coffee and lights a cigar. Halloa ! I hear a horse."

The party listened attentively. Mr. Longvale's ears had not deceived him. The sound of a horse's gallop rapidly grew more distinct.

"Here he comes ! But, good Heavens, where's Pump-ton ?"

"Stop him, Pierce !"

"Stop him, Diggy !"

These were the hasty exclamations that escaped them as a horse, without a rider, galloped by at full speed. The frightened animal swerved between them, and was gone.

"Something has happened," said Mr. Squibs ; looking anxiously from one to the other of his companions. "That's his animal, sure enough."

"Come," said Arthur, "it's no use stopping here. Pump-ton has had a spill, and may be hurt. We had better go down to

the cab, and drive towards London as quick as possible."

Hardly a mile from the end of the lane the cabman pulled up. Lord Pumpton's body lay bleeding by the side of the road. Apparently his horse had shied, and had thrown the rider headlong against the stonework which protects the footpath. Life was not extinct: his lordship breathed; but the deep wound in his head, from whence the blood trickled profusely, convinced even an unskilful eye that the skull had been fractured.

There was no time to be lost. The unfortunate nobleman was placed in one of the cabs, and the two seconds took charge of him. Arthur promised to break the news of the accident to Lady Pumpton. Pierce got into the other carriage, returned to his lodgings, and was soon in bed.

And now, how had this shocking incident occurred? Lord Pumpton, we have little doubt, did conceive the brilliant notion

that it was what Mr. Longvale called a "fine thing" to keep the party chattering their teeth at the bottom of the lane, while he, with aristocratic supineness, sipped his coffee and lit his cigar at home. By this arrangement, he probably hoped to ensure his own teeth from similar vibratory collisions; and, when he did mount his impetuous steed, there was no necessity to prolong his exposure to the inclement weather by a tardy course upon the road.

Swift as was the noble gentleman's charger, the speed admitted of acceleration. His lordship spared not the cutting whip, and the high-bred animal sped madly along the turnpike. A very few minutes would have brought them to the place of meeting. They had but a mile to go. It proved too far for one of them. A wretched cur, roused from its restless slumbers by the clattering hoofs, dashed viciously at the charger's heels. With a snort of terror, a sudden heave, the frightened horse dis-

charged his burden, and the rest is known to the reader.

Whether or not the fracture in his lordship's skull may be imputed to supercilious selfishness, or to an improper disregard of punctuality, is beyond the province of human wisdom to determine. If he had not started late, he would not have been in a hurry; if he had not been in a hurry, he would not have galloped so as to disturb the cur; if he had not disturbed the cur, the cur would not have frightened his horse; if his horse had not been frightened it would not have thrown him off; and if his lordship had not been thrown off, &c., &c. But, again, the phases of selfishness are as multitudinous as men; and if this was one of them, it was severely punished.

The day following that of Lord Pumpton's accident (he was now in the hands of a penitent wife) Mr. Gregory answered Pierce in person. He had set off for town immediately after the receipt of the letter. Almost

the first person he met was Lord Longvale. The report of the quarrel had been noised abroad. Arthur had apprized his uncle of the particulars of its origin, as well as of its termination. His lordship's communications, therefore, were most gratifying to Pierce's friend; and not the less so because Lord Longvale, in mentioning the occurrence, took the opportunity to bestow many encomiums on Pierce's character. Very much to the surprise of Mr. Gregory, Lord Longvale, of his own accord, referred to More's attachment to his daughter. He spoke on the subject without reserve; and made certain confidential statements which helped to explain the apparent inconsistency of Lady Eda's behaviour. These and other small matters of interest were shortly afterwards evolved in the course of Mr. Gregory's interview with the person whom they chiefly concerned.

Pierce did not notice the entry of his visitor. Mr. Gregory spoke to him, but he

did not turn his eyes from the direction whither they vacantly stared. Mr. Gregory tapped him on the shoulder. He started: and, seeing who it was that thus disturbed his reverie, embraced him cordially.

“One would think,” said Mr. Gregory, smiling, “you had visitors in and out of your room all day; you took so little heed of my voice.”

“I hardly expected to see you so soon.”

“Judging from your letter,” said Mr. Gregory, still smiling, “I should say you hardly expected to see me again. I congratulate you on your escape. But you look ill, my boy! Poverty does not agree with you.”

“If Poverty disagrees with me,” Pierce replied, “I must contrive to make friends with her, for we shall be more closely associated than ever now.”

“Why, how so?”

“Read that,” said Pierce, placing a letter as he spoke in the hands of Mr. Gregory.

“An ejection from Bellerby!” exclaimed

Mr. Gregory. "The mode of proceeding is illegal. He has no right of entry ; besides, he has made no former declaration, has he ?"

"I don't understand you."

"This is the first intimation you have received from him ? You have had no notice to appear in Court to defend your possession ?"

"I received some time back an incomprehensible letter about one John Doe and some indefinite Richard Roe. I thought the letter was from a madman, and burnt it."

"Why, my boy, you are in a sad scrape. I fear this scoundrel, Bellerby, may prove more than a match for us. Do you know that by this time your attorney is most likely in possession of Moreton Hall ?"

Pierce turned pale at the thought.

"Curses on him !—God forgive me—but surely rather will the old house crumble and crush him in its ruins !"

"I am afraid that won't help us out of the difficulty. We must see my lawyer and hear

his opinion. I have no doubt something may be done."

"Done!" cried Pierce, fiercely, "you speak calmly, Mr. Gregory. You little know the pang it costs me to part with this last relic of my shattered fortune. I care not to eat my bread in idleness; I do not covet the rents I have been robbed of. The fruits of my own labour would be a thousand times sweeter than those I have hitherto feasted on. Let who will glut his appetite on the sweat-won earnings of the thralled poor, I have energies worth more riches than will suffice to feed and clothe me. All money is polluted before it comes to my hands. I dread to examine the source? Could I do without it, I, like all the world, would hate it. But there are ties which bind me to my home, memories of an innocent childhood, associations of a mother's love—a mother who loved me as none has ever loved me since—a mother who still lives in spirit, and hallows with holy influences the precincts of that home. Such

bonds are hard to break. No others have such hold upon me now ; and—Moreton taken from me—I am indeed a ruined man !”

He struggled with his emotions, and both for a time were silent.

“These things,” said Mr. Gregory soothingly, “are hard to bear ; but do not repine. Remember, ‘whom God loveth He chasteneth.’ Such trials are not accident. You have borne the rod patiently hitherto ; bear up yet a little longer. All is not lost. I think I know a way to save the Hall yet.”

“How ?” said Pierce, eagerly.

“By purchase, if it is his ; by ejectment, if it is yours.”

“And where am I to get the money ?”

“We will manage that between us, my boy. I have more than I want ; and the only pleasure a lone old man like me can derive from wealth is in contributing to the happiness of those he loves.”

“No, no,” said Pierce, “I have no claim upon you. This cannot, must not be.”

“ You won’t deny,” returned Mr. Gregory, “ my right to do what I like with my own. To be honest with you, Pierce,” here he took More’s hand, “ this is no whim of the moment. You know I am without family. I had a daughter once, but she is dead and lost to me for ever.” For an instant his voice trembled. “ My brother’s family,” he pursued, “ are all provided for. I have seen you tried ; and I know no one so worthy of my affection as you ; if, at least, you will accept it.” Pierce pressed his hand. “ Before I received your letter, which alarmed me beyond expression, I had decided to disclose what I tell you now. I have always been of opinion that an old man who has a fortune to leave, acts most wisely when he disposes of the bulk of it before he dies. For not only, as some philosopher has remarked, is he who defers his charities till after death, ‘ rather liberal of another man’s than his own,’ but he loses the delight of replacing a score of rapacious expectants, by making one more

grateful friend. Hence my decision. It is, my dear boy, to make you my heir when I am dead, and to relieve you at once from this state of poverty you have so creditably submitted to; and which I should not have suffered you to endure so long, had I not foreseen the excellent lesson such inflictions never fail to instil into young minds, anxious to improve occasions, like yours."

Mr. Gregory, observing that Pierce was seeking to express either his gratitude or his remonstrance, repeated his determination as unalterable, and at once changed the subject by alluding to his interview with Lord Longvale.

"He did mention your name," said Mr. Gregory; "and you will not be sorry to hear that he entertains a high opinion of your character."

"I am much flattered, of course," said Pierce, "by the good opinion of Lord Longvale, or of any one whom I respect so much."

“And yet,” returned Mr. Gregory, with a smile, “Lord Longvale’s good opinion should be worth something more to you than that of most people; however much respect you may have for them.”

“There was a time when it would have been. That time is past.”

“I am not so sure of that,” replied the other. “What if Eda reciprocated your affection?”

“I thought once she did so; but I discovered my error. If she did not return my love then, why should she ever change? Besides, my word is passed. I promised never again to renew my suit, and that promise I mean to keep.”

“Circumstances may alter. Do you know, Pierce, Lord Longvale spoke of Lady Eda and of you in a breath—coupled your names together, and talked of—”

“Did he know?” exclaimed Pierce, starting up, “did he know what had passed between us?”

"To be sure he knew it. You did not imagine your attentions to his daughter had escaped his observation?"

"And what said he?"

"That Eda liked you."

"Indeed! Her manner said as much; but her tongue contradicted her manner."

"I think she loved you."

Pierce sighed.

"Why do you tantalize me? I had ceased to think of her but as an impossible dream — the ideal goddess of my destiny, by whose altars I sometimes stray to place a chance offering of love-inspired virtue. More than this she can never be to me. Why would you tempt me to cast away the 'vantage I have so dearly won?"

"I would not say it if I did not think it," returned Mr. Gregory. "Mark me, I do not counsel you, but if you chose to run the risk of wrecks, you might again embark a hope. Her father had destined her for his nephew's wife. Does this explain her conduct?"

“Barely. Why did she not spare me by confessing this betrothal?”

“For the best of reasons. Her hand was so far engaged, in that Arthur had never claimed it. Her preference was manifestly for you. But duty to her father, and the long habit of looking upon Arthur as the husband he had chosen, reconciled her to the sacrifice which, believe me, she must have felt in rejecting your suit.”

“And Arthur—why does he hesitate to declare himself?”

“His choice is free. Lord Longvale has never breathed a word of this scheme to his nephew. Much as he wishes for the match, he knows too well the evils of an ill-assorted marriage, to compass his design by the bias of an avowed desire.”

“But Arthur is in love with her.”

“And she is very fond of her cousin; but does not love him.”

“How do you know?”

“Lord Longvale told me so.”

“ You have raised such delicious visions in my mind, that I almost dread to look upon them lest they vanish again, and leave the blank more blank than ever.”

“ Beware! I have told you the truth: still, be on your guard! And now I must leave you; but, before I go, you must show me your adopted child, in whom your letters have given me quite an interest.”

“ I’ll ring for him,” said Pierce. “ You have no idea what a fine little fellow it is. I dare say he will be rather shy; he does not see many strangers, poor child! He lives entirely with my good landlady. She has a boy a year or two older, and the two are immense allies.”

Master Johnny was sent for: and Mrs. Daniels was in a great bustle, polishing Johnny’s chubby little face with the infallible soap-suds, and brushing his hair so as to make the most of the curls. Presently, up he came, looking ^rvery clean and very bash-

ful. He stared hard at Mr. Gregory: but the moment Mrs. Daniels let go his hand, he ran up to Pierce, hiding behind him, and keeping tight hold of his protector's coat-tails. But Pierce drew him from his covert: and now it was Mr. Gregory's turn to stare.

"Go and speak to that gentleman," said Pierce to Johnny; "see, he has got a present for you."

Johnny did as he was bid. Mr. Gregory seemed to be unaccountably affected, while he steadfastly regarded the child.

"How wonderful!" he murmured, half aloud. "The eyes are the same; and the mouth is her mouth. Did you ever," said he, addressing himself to Pierce, "did you ever see this child's mother?"

Before Pierce replied, he desired Johnny to go and play with Master Daniels. When the child was gone—

"Never alive," he answered. "Poor creature! she died the night before I discovered

her lodging. Her's was a melancholy ending, and a melancholy story. In the event of my being shot, I had intended to have put you in possession of the letters she wrote me ; hoping you might by chance find some clue to her relations. Her last wishes were that this child should, if possible, be placed under the protection of her father. Had I been with her a few hours earlier, I should have learnt from her lips the name of her family. She speaks in her letters of having disgraced that name ; and would only communicate it to me by word of mouth."

"Have you those letters at hand?" inquired Mr. Gregory, with breathless interest.

"They are in my desk. You shall see them."

Pierce handed to Mr. Gregory the packet which he had before made up and directed to him. The old man broke the seal of the outer cover ; and, as his eyes fell on the handwriting of the enclosed papers, he muttered his daughter's name—and sank speechless

into his chair. The truth instantly flashed upon Pierce's mind : and, with mute astonishment mingled with a profound sympathy for the old man's grief, he recognized in Mr. Gregory the uncle of Taylor, and the grandfather of his adopted charge.

The shock was severe ; and it was some time before Mr. Gregory sufficiently recovered to listen to the sad history which Pierce related to him. He deferred reading the details until he should be more composed. He was greatly surprised to find that his nephew was still living ; and could with difficulty restrain his impatience to receive the intelligence from Southampton which Pierce had expected by the morning's post. The regain of his grandchild was a subject of heartfelt thanks to Providence. He had found an heir to supplant the one he had just chosen ; but his gratitude to Pierce was so sincere that he resolved at every expense to recover for him his beloved home, and

enough of the property to enable him to reside there.

Pierce's joy was unbounded at the happy disclosure : he thought no more of his own misfortunes and uncertain prospects. He heartily congratulated Mr. Gregory. He rejoiced for the sake of the child. He doubted not that Mr. Gregory's generosity would easily be extended to the widow who had nursed his daughter. He anticipated the meeting between the old man and his nephew ; and devised for the latter numberless plans for a more happy lot. When his attention reverted to himself, it was with a keen sense of gratitude he acknowledged the privilege of having been the indirect channel by which these occurrences had been brought about. His chief anxiety was now for the success of Taylor's, or rather Edward Gregory's, pursuit. But he was soon to be relieved from that cause of suspense ; for while old Mr. Gregory was still with him, an express messenger arrived from South-

ampton, and delivered into Pierce's hands this hasty despatch :

“ Winter is found. He is on board a vessel that sails to-night or to-morrow morning for America. At present a terrific gale is blowing : it may detain the ship. I have not been able to get a boat to carry me on board : she is lying in the roads. I am now going in search of another boat. I must, if possible, get out before dark. It threatens to be an awful night. Come down, if you can, directly you receive this.

“ E. G.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE two set off without loss of time. It was about nine in the evening when they reached Southampton. They went straight to the lodging-house where Edward Gregory had written his despatch. He had been there about an hour before, but had gone out again immediately, and had left no message with the people of the house. Pierce inquired of the sailors and customs' officers on the quays, what ships were bound for America. Several were to sail before the end of the week ; but there was a vessel in the roads which ought to have gone out that day, she was only

kept by stress of weather. They believed she would sail at daylight if any change took place in the wind.

The two friends returned to Edward Gregory's lodgings. They waited till ten o'clock; by which time they decided that he must have gone off to the ship; and, after some consultation, Pierce resolved, if possible, to hire a boat and go on board. Mr. Gregory thought it rash to venture out on so rough a night, and tried to dissuade his companion from the hazardous undertaking. Pierce, however, who had cruized all over the world, laughed at the danger, and turned a deaf ear to Mr. Gregory's entreaties. He bid the old man dismiss his alarm, and, muffling himself up in a stout pea-jacket, walked briskly to the quay.

The night was black as pitch; and there seemed no prospect of the gale abating. The ropes and rigging of the vessels rattled and creaked even within the shelter of the docks. The spray mounted

over the walls of the quay in huge clouds that would have drenched him to the skin had he stood within their reach. Not a boat was to be hired at any price. One lot of sailors he spoke to, advised him to wait till morning. The chances were, they said, such a sea would swamp a small boat before it got clear of the harbour. From another lot he learnt that a man, after offering large sums to watermen to take him out to the roads, had, about a couple of hours after dark, gone alone in a Ryde wherry.

“A Ryde wherry, to be sure,” said they, “was as good a sea-boat as could be built for the size; but in such a gale she was more than one man could manage properly; and this gentleman was apparently not very strong nor healthy either.”

At last he learnt that the captain of the outward-bound ship was then on shore. The vessel's long boat was lying at one of the wharfs waiting to take him off. Thither he hurried. The sailors belonging to the

boat though covered in tarpaulin jackets and "sou'-wester" hats, were wet through, and cold and surly. They could not tell him when the captain would be down; and gave him no hopes of a passage even if he waited. A shilling or two, spent amongst these fellows in the nearest public-house, speedily created a more favourable impression of the treater. They now hoped the captain might give him a passage; but they had evidently no very high estimation of their master's amiability.

Pierce questioned them concerning their passengers. The steerage and poop-cabins were filled. They did not know much of them. There was only one man they knew anything about; and he was a particular friend of the captain's. The description they gave of this passenger coincided so accurately with the appearance and personality of Winter, that Pierce had no longer any doubt as to his being on board. He was about to push his inquiries, when the impatient voice

of the master summoned them to the boat.

Pierce ran down with them to the wharf; and as the captain cursed the men for being out of the way, he thought he remembered that coarse blustering voice, but could not call to mind where or when he had heard it before. Pierce addressed him civilly, and begged for a seat in his boat. He rudely declined, and still cursed the men for being so slow with their oars. Again Pierce urged his request; endeavouring, as he did so, to recollect the irritable features of the captain. Suddenly this person seemed to be struck with Pierce's voice and countenance.

"I say," he exclaimed, "haven't we met before?"

"Yes, I'm sure of it, but I don't know where."

"Let's have a look at your face," said the captain, leading Pierce by the arm to the light which shone from the public-house. For a second or two, each was at a loss to

recognize the other. Presently the captain giving More a shove that nearly sent him to the ground, cried out with an oath :

“It’s you, my young friend is it, that wants a passage in my boat ? I will see you eternally d——d first ! And,” with an oath, “if I did take you, it would be to pitch you overboard as soon as I was in water deep enough to drown you.”

With these words, he hurried to the long boat, which in a few minutes was ploughing through the heavy sea, and fast losing itself in the darkness.

Pierce listened mechanically till the noise of the rowing was indistinguishable from the roar of the storm. And then, of a sudden it occurred to him that the insolent fellow he had just parted from, was no other than the florid-faced man with whom he had quarrelled in a gambling-house six months ago. He also remembered the promise made by the angry and bald-headed gambler to repay the insult of the bread-crumbs.

Leaving him to his own meditations on

these matters, we will endeavour to describe the movements of the pursuer and pursued.

We have already learnt how Edward Gregory, or Taylor, as we have been more accustomed to call him, failing to get off from the shore by any other means, had adopted the rash plan of managing his boat by himself. Every wave threatened to swamp him, but the wherry was stout and seaworthy. Borne on by the certainty of at last grappling with his prey, the lone steersman guided his little vessel through its foaming course; and, reckless of danger, hailed with savage joy the fury of the blast that drove him onward to his revenge.

What was Winter doing? He was safe. His treasure was with him in the ship. The only man whom while living he had feared, was dead now. With his own hands he had stabbed him; with his own eyes he had seen the life-blood ebbing from the wound. He was safe. Between him and the man he had robbed were many miles of land, and three miles of raging sea—the last at this late

hour almost impassable. Long ere it again subsided into calmness he would be still more safe. But there was no danger: the captain was his friend, knew of the treasure, perhaps suspected some secret cause for his anxiety, and had an interest to sail the instant the weather cleared.

Yet withal was Winter anxious. The captain was ashore. Something might detain him, and thus he might lose a favourable change in the wind. He went on deck. Passengers and sailors were every one of them below. He looked abroad. There was no chance of a break. The gale howled about the mastheads. The vessel heaved and strained at her cable, and the seas rolled mountain-high in the dark abyss around him. What a night! Why did he tremble to be alone on deck with none but the black tempest, and his still blacker thoughts to keep him company? The dead could not be brought to life! The murder was committed. But the fraud? The robbery? More had been a kind friend to him. More

could ill afford to lose fifteen thousand pounds. What amendment could he make now? Remorse, or some strange terror, suggested reparation.

He went to his cabin, and there penned two letters: one, advising More of certain measures, by which the fifteen thousand pounds could be regained; the other was to the attorney. Winter made no sacrifice. He was not to lose a penny. He again went on deck, and grinned like a demon, because he had devised a scheme for ruining old Bellerby, and his *daughter*! What a night of fury and wildness it was! He stood in the gangway—looking over at the waves as they dashed swiftly past. How cold, and dark, and fathomless! He had had enough of the waves: he turned his face towards the deck.

Who had left the cabin to stand about there on so foul a night? Somebody who sought him—somebody who comes forward to speak to him. Why does Winter's heart cease beating as that figure confronts him? Why are his limbs palsied with terror? Why

does his tongue cleave to his mouth? Why is every feature set as if in death? Is it a spirit that glares upon him? His hour is come! He grapples with no spirit! They stagger on the gangway brink. Their feet slip, and then a plunge! Oh! how dark, and cold, and fathomless! Taylor is dead! and the dead body hugs the other like a vice, and drags it down—down to death!

* * * * *

Poor Mr. Gregory! It was a melancholy duty to attend as chief mourner at his unhappy nephew's funeral. But it was a sort of sad satisfaction that the body was found. The consecrated churchyard was a more peaceful resting-place for Taylor's weary heart than the never-resting sea.

On the person of Winter were discovered two letters. Both were duly forwarded to their destinations. Pierce found the one addressed to him awaiting his return to London. It ran thus:

“ More,

“ I am going to a country where you will never hear of me again. I do not know what makes me write to you. You think I am a villain. You have a right to think so. I helped to ruin you. I do not want to ruin you. Through Mobbs you can recover the fifteen thousand pounds. Bellerby has robbed you of more than that; and is, if you can believe it, a greater rogue than

“ G. W.”

All we know of the contents of the other letter is, that it contained certain threats to Mr. Bellerby; and informed him of “ a third party, who, if put on oath, would make disclosures concerning a certain forgery, which Mr. Bellerby hitherto supposed no living being but himself and the writer had been witness of.” It assured the attorney that the only obstacle to his conviction was now removed, in the final

departure of the writer for a foreign country. In addition, it stated that "the aggrieved party was at the present moment in possession of all the information necessary to the recovery of his estate; and that it was only by the withdrawal of his false claims, and by the payment of an extra fifteen thousand pounds, that he, the forger, could expect to escape the severest penalties of the law."

So all his schemes had miscarried; and the wretched old man had ruined his beloved daughter, and might end his days with heavy chains about his feeble tottering limbs; might die beneath the wearying toil imposed on other felons like himself, and murderers. He was too feeble to outlive the long sea-voyage. They would surely have some mercy on a poor old man like him. Yet he knew something of the rigour of the law too. He had practised over fifty years as an attorney. Did he ever see mercy shown where guilt was proved? Did *he* ever show mercy, whether guilt was proved or not? Never! Never once in all the fifty years. He never

flinched from his *duty* ! His duty had been to make money, and hoard it for—his daughter. The poor and needy had often and often been ground by him out of their last mite for—his daughter ! Oh ! the accursed forgery ! Oh ! that Winter's villainy ! And Mobbs, too, the prying imp ! What could he do to him ? Nothing ! Nothing would save him.

Then came the awful touch from the hand unseen. Mary, happily unconscious of his guilt, soothed with a daughter's tenderness her father's palsied mind, and paralysed limbs. How wonderfully beautiful was her love and patience ! Day and night the old curmudgeon thanklessly exacted her care ; was fretful, peevish and impatient ; at times passionate, and chid her cruelly. Dear girl ! she cried in secret—cried bitterly for *his* sufferings, not for herself ; and then came back with bright looks and cheerful, that lacerated her heart to feign, even though they were feigned for his sake. This is woman's nature. Until he has probed it thus far, man knows not how much of heaven there dwells on earth.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

OUR history draws to a close. We spare the reader the death-bed scene at Mossbank Cottage. If he has a heart, he will sympathize with the sorrows of the friendless orphan.

We pass over the legal process which reduced Mary Bellerby to poverty, and restored Pierce More to his rightful heritage. We pass over Mr. Gregory's mission to Mossbank ; undertaken on the part of his young friend. We already know enough of the good old man, to conceive his ready compassion for the gentle creature whom, by the

strong arm of the law, and in the fulfilment of justice, he had purposed to dispossess. With the tenderest consideration for her destitute position, he carefully concealed from her the circumstances of the reversion : and when the last rites had been paid to her father, it was with a thankful heart that Mary found a protector in Mr. Gregory ; and with confidence and hope that she accepted, at least for a time, his offer of a home.

We pass over the manly generosity of Pierce. His liberality towards Mary remained for many years a secret between him and his man of business.

We pass over the first six months of mourning and of strangeness ; and we find Mary still the happy inmate of Mr. Gregory's country house ; replacing with assiduous care the filial and domestic duties once performed by his own daughter. The warmth of her affectionate disposition met with a quick return in the heart of her benevolent guardian. She made no comparison ; she could only think

with tears of Mossbank Cottage ; but it was easy to see that in every respect her present asylum was a home more genial to her nature than the one she had quitted for ever.

The first year in her new abode is past. The party in that house is a cheerful one. Pierce, who is there, has been a constant visitor ever since the change in his fortunes. Mr. Gregory loves him as if he was his son ; and Pierce loves Mary as if she was his sister. Johnny romps about the house all day, except when Mary keeps him perched up by her side for an hour every day to teach him his letters, and introduce him to certain mysterious ideas of her own—not such ideas as enter the hard heads of philosophers—but, such ideas as are peculiar to the mind of woman. The practical result of which is, that Johnny imbibes some of that gentleness of woman's nature, which is to soften the after asperity of the man's. He learns to love good for its own sake ; to do it for the sake of others ; and

spite of his puzzle over the Catechism and the dogmas of his faith, he founds from *example* the truest conceptions of a true religion.

The home is a bright one. All the inmates we have named are as members of one happy family. But there is yet another, whom we have not named. He is too good a fellow, and too important to be forgotten. Besides, for the matter of that, he has as much right to be mentioned as any of them, for he has been a constant visitor at Mr. Gregory's house. Pierce had brought him there seven or eight months ago, and being also an old friend of Mr. Gregory's, he had made long and frequent visits. He was, wonderful to relate, growing very sick of London society; and, more wonderful still, he was daily growing remarkably fond of some other society. The reader will appreciate this allusion to Mr. Arthur Longvale; and perhaps the reader might also guess what the "particular" society was he grew so fond of. If

not, we merely hint that amongst other trifling circumstances indicating the present state of Mr. Arthur's mind, was a singular propensity to stop at home, at least his present home, in the very best days of September, when Lord Longvale's partridges and Mr. Gregory's partridges were only waiting for him to shoot them; and moreover, that if he did take out his gun he would have bagged, could he have done so with all he shot, perhaps two or three birds, a haystack, a great many hedges and turnips, half-a-dozen pigs or a donkey.

We pass over one more year. But before we part, dear reader, we ask you to take a five minutes peep into the library at Moreton Hall. It is one of the snuggest rooms in the house; especially in winter time. The yule-log burns brightly on the hearth, and the crackling flames throw a cheerful gleam on the faces of the assembled party. A large easy-chair on one side of the chimney is occupied by Mr. Gregory. His grandchild

is ensconced beside him. Opposite, is another easy-chair of like capacious dimensions. Mr. Arthur Longvale monopolizes its comforts with sublime indifference to all other sublunary situations. Perched on an arm of this chair, and leaning on her husband's shoulder, is Mary. She is engaged in pushing back the hair from Arthur's forehead; the better to admire his manly features. Pierce stands with his back to the fire. He has been thinking what more can be done to improve the neatness or the comfort of a park lodge just built by him; and now tenanted by a widow who once lived in a dreary court in Westminster. Wandering from this subject, his attention veered to Mossbank Cottage; and he smiled to think of the turn fortune had at last taken in favour of its present owner, Mr. Posthumus Mobbs. He then began to wonder whether the last gown he had given to Mrs. Daniels was exactly suited to that good woman's taste; and by various stages his reflections brought him at length

back again to the library of Moreton Hall.

He looked at the pair on his left hand and sighed. What perfect happiness it would be to have a wife like Mary! Oh! if there was only such a being to pull his hair—how!—and so on.

“It’s very jolly being married,” said Arthur to Pierce, “isn’t it Molly?”

Mary gave her husband a small box on the ear, and then kissed his forehead to make it well.

“Perhaps it is,” said Pierce.

“I wish you would get a nice wife, old fellow,” said Arthur.

“It’s rather difficult,” returned Pierce; “and does not always depend entirely on oneself.”

“Patience,” said Mr. Gregory. “I think Pierce has no right to quarrel with fortune, or mistrust the wisdom of Providence. He has experienced adversity; but he has tasted the sweetness of its uses. He has learnt to

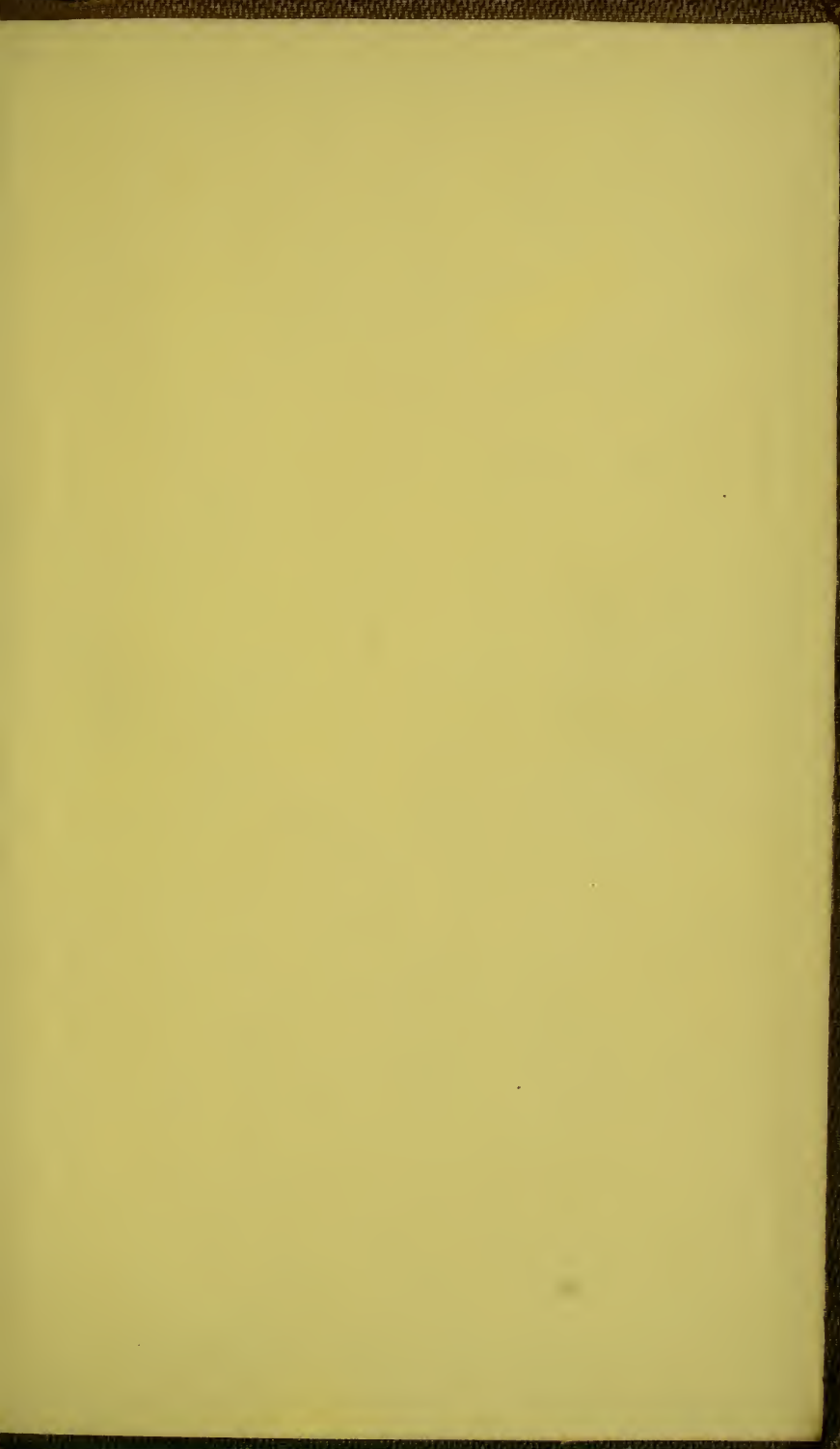
encounter trials rather than yield to them ; and he has been taught, what philosophy alone can never teach, that a man best secures his own happiness by labouring as far as lies within his power for the happiness of his fellow-creatures."

THE END.

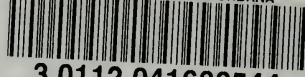
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